God
220 · 12
Tre/Bri
111236

THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
Town Hall, Bombay.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 05 October, 2018

B-g-51

BRIEF THOUGHTS AND MEDITATIONS

BRIEF THOUGHTS AND MEDITATIONS

ON SOME PASSAGES IN

HOLY SCRIPTURE

111236

BY

RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH, D.D.

ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN

CHANCELLOR OF THE ORDER OF ST PATRICK

B.
9.
51

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.

London

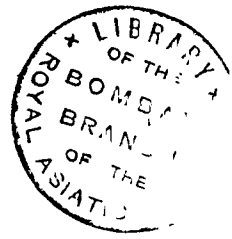
MACMILLAN AND CO.

1884

All rights reserved

God
220.12
Jre/Bri
111236

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET



CONTENTS.

		PAGE
1.	Our Sins finding us out	1
2.	The Widow's Mite	6
3.	The True Vine	10
4.	The sincere Milk of the Word	14
5.	The Good Samaritan	18
6.	The Blessing of the Merciful	22
7.	The Good Wine last	26
8.	Spiritual Wickednesses in High Places	31
9.	Humility	35
10.	The Perils of the Infancy	40
11.	Fear of Death	44
12.	Christ's Heaviness	47
13.	Judas Iscariot	51
14.	Esau	55
15.	Rash Judgments	59

PAGE

16. The Light of the World 63

17. The Callings of Christ 68

18. Subjection to Vanity 72

19. The Father's Pleasure in the Passion of His Son . 78

20. Sin's Dominion 83

21. Sins of Others and of our Own 87

22. Christ Knocking 91

23. The Woman pressed in an Ephah 95

24. The Great Refusal 100

25. God's Judgments a Great Deep 105

26. Joash 109

27. Discontent 113

28. Thankfulness 116

29. David's Sin and Repentance 120

30. Vicarious Suffering 123

31. Birth Sin 128

32. Man his own Destroyer 132

33. The Son of Man in His Glory 136

34. Christ as a Refiner 140

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.

BRIEF THOUGHTS AND MEDITATIONS

ON SOME PASSAGES IN

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

1. *OUR SINS FINDING US OUT.*

'Thy sin shall find thee out.'—*Num.* xxxii. 23.

By the mouth of thy servant, Lord, Thou hast said this; and everything around us and within us, sooner or later, attests the truth of this saying; attests the fact that Thou art a God of judgment, making men to reap as they have planted, and to eat the fruit of what they themselves have sown. None but the wilfully blind can refuse to trace the footsteps of a divine Avenger who walks the world. There needs no judgment day to make this plain: for every day after its own fashion, and sometimes after a very notable fashion, has been in some sort such a judgment day. Our God has not said in vain, '*Thy sin shall find thee out.*'

But how, it may be asked, does this come to pass? First then, our sins find us out when there is a direct connexion of cause and effect between the two, the sin and its punishment, and in the most literal sense of the word, we eat the fruit of our own doings. The *delirium tremens* which overtakes the drunkard, the premature decrepitude or forlorn old age of him who has laid waste his youth by sensual excesses, the rags with which the sluggard is clothed, the shameful fall which so often the proud prepares for himself, what are all these but men's sins finding them out, the sin having all along been big with the punishment, and in due season bringing it forth—according to our own proverb, 'Old sin, new shame,' old and new being linked with one another by indissoluble bonds, and sooner or later making this relation between them to appear?

But not in this way only do men's sins find them out. Oftentimes there is no such connexion of cause and effect; but there is that conformity between the sin and the punishment, that unmistakeable resemblance between them, which it is impossible to ascribe to blind chance. Scripture, and not Scripture only, is full of examples in

this kind. It is measured to men exactly as they have measured to others; the very cup which they have held to the lips of others being by-and-by held to their own. The deceiver is deceived; the violator of the sanctities of another man's home beholds his own trampled on and violated in turn. The wicked king, that slew the prophets and left their very bodies unburied, is himself slain and cast forth with the burial of an ass. So marvellous is the conformity between the sin and the suffering that there is wrung from the sufferer, sometimes in the hearing of all the world, but oh! how much oftener in the secret of his soul, a confession of the same: 'As I have done, so God hath requited me' (Judg. i. 7; Rev. xvi. 6). Others may miss the connexion, may not so much as guess that there is one; but he knows only too well whose hand it was that smote him; from what wing the arrow which pierced him has been drawn.

Then too men's sins often find them out, though no visible sign or token may betray this fact to the world. All may outwardly stand fair; there may be no breach in the worldly prosperity, nay, this may be ampler, more strongly established than ever; while yet there may be that within

which forbids to rejoice, which takes all the joy and the gladness out of life—the memory of that old sin which was as nothing when committed, but which now darkens all, the deadly arrow poisoning the springs of life, which will not drop from the side, which no force, no art of man's device can withdraw. Is there not here one whose sin has found him out? Neither let us assume that it is only the wicked whose sins thus come round to them again. God is faithful, and will not allow his own children to escape altogether, any more than the children of this present world. The cup of suffering may be filled more fully for some than for others; but it shall come round in due time to all.

What shall we say to all this? If earlier or later, first or last, our sins do thus so often overtake us even here, shall we not put far from us so evil a thing and one which has such a fatal power of thus coming back on him that wrought it? It may be that it is too late for this; but there is still something which we *can* do. We can, so to speak, take the initiative; turn the table on our sins, and instead of waiting for them to find us out, we, earnestly seeking, by aid of that candle which the Lord has lighted in us may find out them; and

then we have the sure word of promise that, if we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged of the Lord. Lord, may we seek till we find them, these roots of bitterness, sure, if we show mercy to them, to spring up and trouble us at the last, however long they may remain hidden. And having found, may we bring them all to Thee; the old sins and the new corruptions, that in the same act of thine they may be at once condemned and pardoned and subdued; condemned by thy righteous judgments, O Father; pardoned by the precious blood of thy dear Son; subdued by the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost. That indeed were a blessed finding out by us of our sins, to be preferred how far to a miserable waiting till they find us out, as they else in the end will inevitably do.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.

2. *THE WIDOW'S MITE.*

'There came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites which make a farthing.'—*Mark* xii. 42.

Of how many events which once filled the world with their fame, the faintest echoes have now faded utterly away; while this little incident, this story of 'the widow's mite' as we call it, lives and will live in the hearts and upon the lips of men as long as the world endures. And may we not confidently affirm that it was intended so to do? Seems it not, while we read, as if the Lord had set Himself over against the Treasury with the very purpose of sanctifying the gifts which should be cast therein, and drawing their moral from them, should a fit occasion arise? This does He, as we cannot doubt, that so nothing may be lost, that nothing which has any true value in it may miss its praise and its reward; thus careful is He whom we serve, that no smallest labour of love wrought for his name's sake shall be passed over or forgotten. I speak of small, but indeed what right have we

to designate anything as small which Christ designates as great, rectifying and redressing our estimate of things, and substituting for it a higher, and one which we must at once acknowledge to be higher, the standard namely of heaven for the standards of earth? Does not the Lord himself declare that her offering was *not* small, that she had cast more into the Treasury than the bringers of large gifts and costly offerings—more in his sight, and more in his Father's sight, looking as He does not at what the offerer brings, but far more than this, from whence he brings it, and what proportion it bears to that which remains behind; the qualitative appreciation of things as set over against the quantitative, beyond which last the ordinary Pharisee had not advanced? What proportion her gift bare we know: it was '*all the living that she had*,' and left nothing behind. Surely there is here a word of comfort for the poor, a word of warning for the rich. The large-hearted poor, they must be sometimes grieved, and in a manner hurt, that they have comparatively so little to render back to Him from whom every good thing they possess has come. But let them take courage from this Scripture, and note for how much their little, if

rightly offered, may stand, and how different the arithmetic of heaven from the arithmetic of earth. And the rich, for them too there is a lesson of warning here; this namely, how easily, giving out of their abundance, they may deceive themselves—may believe that they are giving largely, when indeed they are hardly giving at all; how serious a task lies before *them*, if they would bring their offerings into at all the same proportion to their havings and gettings, as do some of their poorer brethren, and thus obtain like praises of God.

But if it be thus hard for the rich to give, even though they cast in much, if Christ throws here a certain slight even on the large offerings of such, what may we suppose He would have said, had He marked these rich casting in their two mites to the Treasury? With what scorn and indignation would He have noticed and put back, even if He had thought good to notice at all, these hypocritical gifts of theirs? And yet is there not something only too like to this which every day goes on before our eyes, we perhaps helping it forward by our allowance of it, if not by our own examples? Who is there that has not heard one of the rich of this world, one perhaps of those monsters of money

which this age is producing, and beside whom a Crœsus or a Dives shrinks into something like a pauper—which, I say, among us has not sometimes heard one of these announcing, 'I bring my widow's mite'—he thinking to palliate by this absurdly misappropriate term the meanness of the paltry contribution which he brings to the needs of God's house or God's poor, nay rather implicitly claiming in these words, as he shares in her gift, to share also in her reward? Ah Lord, make Thou me to feel and to understand that, so far as any stewardship of earthly goods has been committed to me, the bringing of what is thus called 'the widow's mite,' quite apart from the widow's penury out of which it is brought, is ridiculous; or is only not ridiculous, because it involves so serious a provocation of Thee, by whom actions are weighed, and who distinguishest great and small with far truer eyes than are ours.

3. *THE TRUE VINE.*

'I am the true Vine.'—*John* i. 15.

Thou hast said, O Lord, and the words rank among some of the latest which Thou utteredst upon earth, 'Every branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purgeth [or pruneth it] that it may bring forth more fruit.' We notice here a certain austerity, such as we may not seldom trace even in the promises and rewards of God. The fruit-bearing branches, how shall it fare with them? What reward shall they have? This is their reward—they shall be pruned. Their too luxuriant branches shall be checked, which oftentimes can be only done by a far sharper discipline, a far keener use of the pruning-knife, than they would willingly have chosen for themselves. Christ pledges the faithfulness of his Father, that He, the great Vine-dresser or Husbandman, in his very faithfulness will not leave his own without that chastening which they shall need for their perfection—that

chastening, strange as this saying may sound in carnal ears, being itself a part of their reward.

And very significant is the intention of this pruning of theirs, namely, 'that they may bring forth more fruit,' more fruit of faith, of patience, of love. Of how many of God's dealings with his elect we have here the explanation and the key. We sometimes wonder in respect of some of these, that He should cast them again and again into the crucible of trial. It seems to us that they are already refined gold. But He sees that in them which we do not see, a further fineness which may be attained, and He will not give over until that is attained. It is just as in a portrait by some cunning artist, which is now drawing near to its completion. Men look upon it as it still lingers upon the painter's easel, and count it perfect, and are impatient with the artist that he does not withdraw his hand, and pronounce that it is finished. He meanwhile knows better, touches and retouches, returns again and again to his toil. And why? Because there floats before him an ideal of possible excellence at which he has not yet arrived, but which he will not let alone until he has embodied it in his work. It fares exactly

so with God and some of his elect servants. Men seeing their graces which so far exceed the graces of common men, wonder sometimes why they should suffer still, why they seem to be ever falling from one trial to another. But He sees in them what no other eye can perceive, the grace which is capable of becoming more gracious still; and in his far-looking love for his own, who shall praise Him not for a day but for an eternity, He will not suffer them to stop short of the best whereof they are capable. They are fruit-bearing branches, and just because they are so, He prunes them that they may bring forth more fruit; even as on the other hand the penalty of not bearing fruit is the not being able to bear it, the very capabilities of service being withdrawn and taken away. Ah, what a mournful thing it is to watch the gradual withering, and, so far as we can see, the final death of a branch which once promised to bear much fruit. Would it were a rarer sight; but alas! it is not rare. Strange as this may sound, there is many a man who has followed himself, all that once constituted his better self, to his own grave. He is no mourner—would he were, for then there might be hope—but he is an assister at the grave of his own better hopes and holier

desires, of all wherein the true life of his soul consisted; which all is dead and buried, though he, a sad survivor of himself, may still cumber the world for a while, till he too 'with sparkless ashes loads an unlamented urn.' Avert, O gracious Lord, that doom from us. Whatever else that doom may be, suffer it not to be this.

4. *THE SINCERE MILK OF THE WORD.*

'As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.'—1 *Pet.* ii. 2.

THY word, O God, fears not to magnify itself. Very excellent things are spoken of it and by it. It is declared, or rather declares itself, a light to the eyes, a lamp to the feet; it converts the soul, gives understanding to the simple. But fair as all these utterances about that word are, no fairer has been uttered at any time in its praise than this, in which St. Peter bids us as newborn babes, newborn out of the old world of sin and death into the kingdom of the regeneration, to desire—or as it is more strongly in the Revised Version, to '*long for*'—'*the sincere milk of the word*:' while, following up the figure with which he started, he suggests and supplies the motive for this longing, namely that we may grow thereby. How exquisitely beautiful is the image! Thus who is there that has not noticed with what instinctive longing the babe desires the milk of the breast;

needs no teacher here, but with only this instinct for its guide, feels and finds a way thither for itself? Who has not seen how this, and nothing else but this, will still its cries and satisfy its longings? Men full-grown may wax weary of the costliest artificial dainties; what pleased them once may, after a little experience, fail to please any more; but the babe is never weary of the breast, and of the sincere milk which may be drawn from thence. The epithet which St. Peter uses here, one of a rare beauty in the original, is one which has lost none of its beauty, a loss only too common, in its transfer from one language to another. That '*milk*' he means, which is unsophisticated, unadulterated, in which there is no admixture of human falsehood and error, which is drawn, as it were, pure from the Heavenly Wisdom's breasts.

Ah! what an implicit reproach there is here for me, if I meditate the Scriptures not at all, or at best as a formal task, if there is no sweetness, no preciousness for me in this word of God's, no abiding delight—if, after a very little acquaintance with this, it palls presently on my spiritual appetite, and pleases me no more. Desire, O my soul, this '*sincere milk of the word*,' and desire it not for delight

only, but, as thou art here reminded, for growth as well, and indeed for this first of all; for indeed growth is the true proof and pledge of life. A painted child is the same to-day as yesterday, and years hence will be still the same; but the living child, how it presses forward continually to the fulness of the stature bodily and mental appointed for it. And if this growth be thoroughly healthy how equable it is, growth in every part, not of head only, but of heart as well, and growth by that which every joint, and not one only, supplieth.

But if these things are so, suffer me not to read thy word, ignobly content with that to which I have reached, with little or no desire that I may grow thereby; but in every taste of its sweetness finding a new motive and incentive to return to it again and again. The sweetness of it, if we have indeed once tasted this, renders inexcusable all after neglects of ours. Certainly it was not for nothing that the seer of the Apocalypse could declare of the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden of God that it bore twelve manner of fruits, a new one every month (Rev. xxii. 2); figuring many things thereby, and no doubt figuring among these the inexhaustible riches of that word of God, which is

at once medicine and food, good for healing all the hurts and staying all the hungers of the soul. Nor is this all. Fear not that thou shalt ever come to an end of what it shall have to give thee. One seeking to deliver thee from any fear of this said long ago, 'The Sacred Scripture has first draughts, it has second draughts, it has third' (*Habet Scriptura Sacra haustus primos, habet secundos, habet tertios*: Augustine). And in our own day one has well written, 'Scripture cannot, as it were, be mapped, or its contents catalogued; but after all our diligence to the end of our lives and to the end of the Church, it must be an unexplored and unsubdued land, with heights and valleys, forests and streams, on the right and left of our path and close about us, full of concealed wonders and choice treasures.'

5. *THE GOOD SAMARITAN.*

'He had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds.'—*Luke* x. 33, 34.

Woe's me, how often have I played the part of priest or of Levite as they figure in this parable. How often have I seen him who was my brother indeed, however little I might own him as such, lying upon the world's highway, his bleeding wounds a dumb supplication for help; and seeing I have hid myself from him. It may have been that he was one whom Satan and his angels had spoiled, stripped him of all, his spiritual lifeblood ebbing fast away by many a ghastly wound; while yet the direness of his extremity has stirred no active compassion on my part; so far indeed from this that I have coined some pitiful excuse for evading the duty which lay so plainly before me. I have said perhaps that some other would presently arrive, on whom the task of assisting would more fitly devolve, or who could assist more effectually than I could hope to do; I have opportunely reminded myself of

the obligations which I owed to the temple and the temple's service, and how ill it would become me to disturb the order of the sacrifices by my untimely absence; and thus by one paltry excuse or another I have withdrawn myself from a work for which I had no heart, involving as it did certain trouble and possible danger. Or if, for very shame, I have played the part of the Good Samaritan for a little moment, how gladly have I at the earliest possible time disengaged myself from it; how little have I imitated the thoughtful love and far-reaching care with which *he* followed up and completed his first act of loving-kindness; how little have I recognized that in beginning as I did, I contracted an obligation to go through with that which thus I had begun.

If at all it has fared with me thus, what need have I to lay earnestly to heart the warning word with which my Lord clenches and closes his admonition here, '*Go thou, and do likewise*;' not contenting myself with a barren admiration, with a seeing from far off the beauty of these acts of self-offering love, while at the same time I shrink from the task and toil of any close imitation upon my own part of Him who has left such footprints behind Him, that we might walk in them.

And that which makes this withdrawal so shameful is the fact that, shrinking from this deed of love, I have shrunk from so much which would have brought me into some nearness to my Lord Himself; for, as I contemplate the Healer and Helper of the parable, how can I stop short of Him? Is there any other who at all exhausts all the aspects or fulfils all the conditions of the Good Samaritan as Thou doest? I look to Thee, who art indeed the Good and the only Good. I no more imagine myself in thy place, but in that rather which expresses my estate much better—that of the poor wounded traveller, of whom I spoke just now. There I find myself indeed. Lying in wait for me as I was carelessly travelling with my face turned away from the Heavenly City to the Profane, from Jerusalem to Jericho, the spoilers spoiled me; stripped me and left me lying in my blood. But Thou hadst compassion, didst bind up my wounds, broughtest me by the sore travail of thy soul to that secure Inn, where Thou providest richly for the crowning and consummating that good work which Thou hast begun, that so thy rescued may rejoice in Thee and Thou in them on the day of thy coming again. It is indeed well with us in

that hospital of souls, whither Thou hast brought us. We bless and praise Thee, being there. And yet, better even than this, when Thou comest again do Thou take us to be ever with Thyself in that other and better habitation which is not an inn for the tarrying of a day; but our Father's house, a *mansion* indeed, for they who reach it shall abide in it for ever, pillars in the temple of God, that shall go out from it no more.

6. *THE BLESSING OF THE MERCIFUL.*

'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.'
Matt. v. 7.

Mercy for the merciful. Thou announcest here, O Lord, one of the most blessed retaliations of that kingdom of heaven, which in some sort is already with us, though in some we wait for it still. I have here used the word 'retaliations,' knowing very well that such are often taken to mean, and to mean only, the measurings back to men by other men, or it may be by God Himself, of evil for evil, and this in the same proportions in which they had themselves measured out the same to others. There is no reason, however, why we should not 'retaliate' benefits as well as injuries, and it is little to the honour of men that 'retaliate,' like 'resent,' has been so nearly lost to use in its better sense as a rendering back to men not of the evil but of the good which they have done to others. But Holy Scripture is full of these more blessed retaliations, and here we have one of them from

the Lord's own lips: He assuring us that for the merciful there is mercy.

But this mercy, it may be asked, what is it, and how does it show itself? I answer briefly, that it shows itself in manifold ways: in our thoughts, in our words, in our deeds; being nowhere better known or more clearly seen than in its contraries.

And first, good men and kind are often unmerciful in their thoughts. Eli was unmerciful, when because he saw Hannah's lips passionately moving as she prayed in bitterness of soul, he counted that she had been drunken, and rebuked her as a daughter of Belial (1 Sam. i. 12–16). And we too are unmerciful in our thoughts as often as we give the worst interpretation to the words and actions of others. How many of these words and actions are capable of being taken by two handles, are patient of two interpretations, a good interpretation and a bad. We are unmerciful when without necessity we are judges of evil thoughts, when we suspect meanness, littleness, untruthfulness, not to speak of worse surmisings, in others. The merciful in thought give no room in their hearts for suspicions such as these. They do not secretly impute evil. They take everything by the

fairest handle which it offers. If they are compelled to form a harsh judgment, or to express the same, it is not harsher than the circumstances of the case, after every allowance made, warrant, or it may be, strictly demand.'

Again, it is only too easy to be unmerciful in words. How cruel these often are. 'With lies thou cuttest as a sharp razor'—yes, and not with lies only. There are other wounds besides these. How cruel the truth can very often be—as when we speak it with no necessity at all, when indeed we might just as easily have held our peace. Often it takes the experience of half a lifetime before we learn what wounds, and how slow to heal, the tongue *can* inflict, and not seldom does. Very often we do not learn it in the whole of a lifetime, dragging as we do to the light again, without pity or remorse, the faults and follies which even the hard world itself was willing should be forgotten and forgiven. Alas! what oil is it that we pour too often into a brother's or a sister's hurt? oil indeed of vitriol, if any oil at all; our very kindnesses proving in actual fact no kindnesses at all, so do we forget the warning of one who bade us not to blemish our good deeds with uncomfortable words."

But last of all, we may be unmerciful in our acts. It needs not for this that we be active in the doing of ill to others. No such malignity is laid to the charge of the Rich Man in one parable; nor to the priest and the Levite in another—and as little ascribed to those who shall be set at the left hand of the throne on the great dividing day that is at hand (Matt. xxv. 45). 'Because ye did it not' is the worst which is laid to the charge of any among these; and yet this is enough, and more than enough, to account for a heaven lost, and all which is farthest from heaven made too surely their own.

7. THE GOOD WINE LAST.

'Thou hast kept the good wine until now.'—*John* ii. 10.

I SHALL do no wrong, but only right, to these words, if I regard the speaker of them here as uttering greater things than he knows, unconsciously under earthly forms declaring everlasting truths of the kingdom of heaven. The words indeed of the ruler here, taken in their literal sense, may pass for what they are worth. That is not much—poor precept as they are; ignoble economy of this meaner world. But set them at a higher key, and of how solemn a truth do they become the bearers. It is thus he speaks: '*Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine.*' The world, in other words, gives to them that have accepted its bidding and sat down at its feast the good wine first; its liveliest joys, its keenest delights—and '*when men have well drunk, then that which is worse.*' Sooner or later it comes to an end of that which it has to offer. Like a poor chapman it may hide for a moment its penury by an empty ostentation of its wares; yet before very

long its poverty is naked and manifest and not to be denied. But Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, has evermore better things in reserve for his guests than all which He has offered them thus far. Good He has ever for them; yet the last better than the first, till in the end they drink with Him of the fruit of the vine new in their Father's kingdom. Is it not even so; and this the very truth, from whatever point we regard it? See we not in them that have come to the world for entertainment and delight, how that world squanders upon them all that it has of apparent good at the outset, and then is forced to offer them satisfactions ever slighter, pleasures ever more vapid, enjoyments from which less and less of joy is to be drawn? Their life is like an ill-constructed tale, upon the beginnings of which the framer has spent all his strength and lavished all his exciting incident, leaving it afterwards to drag lamely and slowly along to its weary and welcome close. Such is their life of whom we here speak, a continual travelling to poverty.

But how differently it fares with them that have accepted Christ's invitation, and sat down at his banquet. Life does not grow poorer for them as they advance upon it, but contrariwise richer.

The fountains of joy are not drying up within them, but are becoming larger and fuller, being fed from the upper sources, even from the river that makes glad the City of our God. They cannot join in the dirges which the tired children of this world are singing over their vanished joys, over the departed glory and gladness of their youth, nor say with them that life is empty, unmeaning, desolate; for they know that it is not empty till we have made it so; it cannot be unmeaning for them upon whom the star of duty has once risen, a star that can never set, though every other in our firmament should disappear; neither can it be desolate, while God is in it, while He is with us upon its loneliest path and in its darkest hour. They prove that to be true which the Psalmist uttered: 'Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age, to shew that the Lord is upright, and that there is no unrighteousness in Him.'

O my soul, if these things be so, there are lessons here of deepest import for thee. This first, namely, that if any man make pleasure the end and aim of his life, he shall inevitably miss that pleasure which he has thus wrongfully made his

principal object and aim. All unlawful snatchings at pleasure are sure sooner or later to defeat themselves. If we make it our chief pursuit, it will inevitably escape us; while if we accept it only when we meet it on our appointed path, we shall find a sufficiency, yea everywhere an abundance of it. Seek to save thy life, and thou shalt lose it. Be content to lose it, boldly to cast it forth, and thou shalt surely find it again. For Duty, the severe arbitress of our lives, may wear a frown on her countenance when we meet her first; but presently, if we will not be terrified by that frown, the fashion of her countenance will be altered, and this earth shall have nothing so fair as the smile upon her face. Ever from the root of self-denial grow the choicest fruits in the Paradise of God, while from the root of self-pleasing grow the Dead Sea fruits which may flatter the eye, but which fill the mouth with ashes and with dust. Dare, if thou art in love with death, to sit down at the world's feast because its 'bread of deceit' allures, and its wine moves itself aright; but presently there will be vile harpies to defile or snatch away its dainties; and rising from that feast thou shalt be as they are who dream that

they have eaten and drunken, but awake and their soul is empty and unsatisfied. But sit down at the feast which Christ makes, and blesses and beautifies with his presence, and at his bidding the water of this world shall become as the wine of heaven, the common bread of this life shall prove angels' food, multiplying for all our wants when once it has passed through his hands, and He has broken and blessed it. The humblest duty shall become a joy, there shall be gladness in the lowliest task; every social and family affection shall be as the channel and inlet of a pure delight for the soul, and we shall praise Him more and more.

8. *SPIRITUAL WICKEDNESSES IN HIGH PLACES.*

'An enemy hath done this.'—*Matt.* xiii. 28.

THERE are not wanting in the Church now, nor have there been wanting in times past, those to whom the doctrine of an Evil Spirit, and one in direct enmity to God, is eminently unwelcome; those who have been at infinite pains to exorcise theology, and to cast out Satan from that domain, even though they should prove impotent to cast him out from any other. All who shrink from looking down into the abysmal depths of man's fall, because they have no eye for the heavenly heights of his restoration, seem to count that much will have been gained if only they can get rid of men's belief in such an Evil Spirit; fallen, and seeking to bring about the fall of others; and this, though it may be very pertinently asked, as indeed it has been asked by a famous child of this present world, What is the profit of getting rid of the *Devil* so long as the *devilish* continues, of explaining away

an Evil *One*, so long as the Evil *Ones* who remain are so many?

What profit indeed? For myself I feel that this doctrine of a Wicked Spirit, tempting, seducing, prompting to rebellion and revolt, so far from casting a deeper gloom on the mournful destinies of humanity, is full of consolation, and lights up with a gleam and glimpse of hope regions which would have been otherwise dark indeed. One might well despair of oneself, having no choice but to believe that all the strange suggestions of evil which have risen up out of one's own heart had been born there; one might well despair of one's kind, having no choice but to believe that all its hideous sins and all its frightful crimes had been self-conceived, born and bred within its own bosom. But there is hope, if indeed 'an enemy hath done this;' if, however the soil *in* which these wicked thoughts, presently to embody themselves in wicked works, have sprung up, has been *the heart of man*, yet the seed *from* which they sprang had been there sown by the hand of another.

And who will venture to deny the existence of that whereof I speak, the devilish I mean, as dis-

tinguished from the merely animal, in man? None, I am confident, who knows aught of the dread possibilities of sin lurking in his own bosom, who has studied with any true insight the moral history of the world around him. In what way else explain that men not merely depart from God, but defy Him; that, instead of the ungodly merely forgetting God and letting Him go, God's name is as often, perhaps more often, on their lips, than on the lips of them that love and obey Him? What else will account for delight in the contemplation or the infliction of pain, the existence of which delight it is idle to deny? What else will explain all the strange inventions of wickedness, above all of cruelty and lust—'lust hard by hate'—which so often make hideous the story of man? What else will explain evil chosen for its own sake, and for that fierce joy which men so often find in the violation of law, this violation being itself that which attracts; with all those other wicked joys, 'mala gaudia mentis,' which the Latin poet in a single phrase has characterized so well?

Strange inexplicable mystery; and yet only too easy to understand so soon as we detect behind man's transgression an earlier transgression and an

earlier transgressor, one who fell, not as man fell, but as only spirits can fall, from the height of heaven to the depth of hell; who, being lost without hope of redemption himself, seeks to work the same loss in other of God's creatures, and counts it a poor triumph to have made men bestial unless he can make them devilish as well.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC

9. *HUMILITY.*

'Be clothed with humility.'—1 *Pet.* v. 5.

Let me bethink myself a little here of this excellent grace of humility, so excellent indeed that it is in some sort the guardian of all other graces; itself the one in whose absence those other might only too easily work no benefit, but hurt and harm rather, for such as have attained to them.

And first let it be vouchsafed to me now and ever to remember that this, the praises of which we are telling, is pre-eminently, nay exclusively, a Christian grace. Even the better among the heathen knew nothing of it. They who, notwithstanding all the drawbacks which cleaved to them, still constituted the election from the heathen world, had many eminent virtues, but this grace of humility was not one of them. Nay, the word itself by which it is designated did not exist in the Greek language until the growth and progress of the Christian faith and of the moral needs of Christian men compelled the language to bring the word, or some

other word its equivalent, to the birth. There was indeed no choice in the matter. A new grace, altogether a new thing, had come into the world; how should it fail to draw after it a new word corresponding? Modesty, very good of its kind, but which takes too much upon it when it assumes the garb of humility, and seeks to stand in its room, is a wholly different thing, dwells but on the surface of things, has for its chief motive that we do not make ourselves ridiculous in the sight of men by pretensions which with a little effort are so easily seen through.

But if not another name for modesty, what, it may be asked, is humility? The question is not always very successfully answered. One who stands very high indeed, and in the main most deservedly so, as a moral teacher in the Church, and not as this theologian only, Chrysostom I mean, has described humility as a making of ourselves small, while we indeed know ourselves to be great, acknowledging a moral deficit in ourselves while we know that in fact nothing exists of the kind. Certainly we cannot praise him, and still less follow him, here. It was to no school of a true humility that he was inviting his scholars here. St. Bernard's

words on the same subject are very greatly to be preferred. 'Humility,' he says, 'is the grace whereby out of the truest heart-knowledge a man becomes vile unto himself.' Here we are on solid ground, and dealing not with fictions and fancies, but with realities. The root, then, out of which humility grows, is a deep conviction of our own guilt and misery—such a conviction as only the Spirit of God can work in us. It is a coming down at his bidding from all the high places of pride and self-conceit in which we had entrenched ourselves, and taking our place with the least and the last.

Again, let me give diligence not to the seeming humble, for this may be only a subtler form of pride, but to the being so. Let me beware of putting humble speeches about myself to others in the place of humble thoughts about myself to my own heart. Extreme depreciation of oneself before the world is very far from being a mark of true humility, is indeed the mark of the contrary rather. The Bishop of Rome calls himself Servant of the servants of God; and did this in those palmiest proudest days when he set his foot upon the neck of prostrate kings. Can we for an instant imagine that he was humbler, and not immeasurably prouder,

for this name of an affected humility which he had thus assumed? Did those his followers who called themselves Minors and Minims gain anything by going through a process of mental humiliation of the like kind? I am bold to say that they did not.

Humility comes to no man by nature. It is a grace which we learn nowhere save in the school of Christ, and under the direct teaching of the Holy Ghost. I say, under this teaching, for no man is truly humble who has not been convinced of sin by the Holy Ghost. Till a man has been so convinced he may acknowledge that this or that which he has done was done amiss; but he does not therefore come down from the high places of his pride and self-satisfaction. He pleads his merits as against his demerits, his virtues as a set-off against his vices—and on the whole, after weighing the good that is in him against the bad, it is most likely that he counts himself a credit to himself and an ornament to human nature in general.

Let one resolution be mine. Whatsoever else thou puttest on, be thou, O my soul, clothed with humility. Whatever else thou wearest, let this be the garment which wraps thee from head to foot, the nearest and closest of all. Exchange thou this

for no other, though, to use the language of an Eastern sage, the mantle of Chosroes were offered thee in its stead. Assuredly it was not without reason that St. Peter, when he bade his followers to array themselves with this excellent grace, employed no vague or common everyday word, but one not elsewhere found in Scripture, and one which implies a so fastening of a garment upon us that it shall not, without an infinite expense of effort and toil, be stripped away from us again. Contained in the word that he uses there is a lesson for us to learn, and which having learned we should do well not to forget.

10. *THE PERILS OF THE INFANCY.*

'They are dead that sought the young child's life.'—*Matt.* ii. 20.

THE perils of the Infancy of our Lord are not without their historic, mythic, and poetic anticipations and counterparts. In Moses they have their historic anticipation. In many, and notably in the real or legendary founders of religions and empires, they have their mythic counterparts; as they have also in the Abraham of Mahometan tradition, in Cyrus and in Romulus; while in Southey's *Thalaba*, as indeed in the Hercules of Greek legend, they have their poetic. Nor is there anything strange in this; for when we regard Christ as the central figure of humanity, it is only to be expected that in Him should repeat themselves in higher forms many of the incidents which had found place, or had been imagined to find place, in other foremost persons of history, in champions, imperfect ones as it proved, but champions still, of the race of men. For how many shadows took substance, how many dreams became

realities in Him! The sense that the world of unrighteousness will be up in arms against the mighty redresser of wrongs, that it will have an instinct of his appearance and what that appearance means, and will endeavour to tread out, while yet a tiny spark, that fire which shall one day consume it, this sense men have everywhere had; and with this, and as a consequence of this, they have felt that his very Infancy shall breed dangers of its own, that there shall be plots of hell against the Destroyer from heaven long before He has put forth his destroying might, that in his very cradle he shall find serpents to strangle.

We may say with reverence that this same active hostility could scarcely have been absent from the life of Him with whom we have to do. The mighty conflict between light and darkness which pervades all history had now reached at once its deepest depth and highest height. Here were Ormuzd and Ahriman arrayed to do battle in earnest. In every other witness for the light there was something, oftentimes much, of the darkness which he went forth to combat; but here was light in which was no darkness at all. The whole might and malice of hell must therefore array itself against

this purest manifestation of the opposing kingdom; and whatever hostility it had put forth thus far against the kingdom of light and its lower forms, must repeat itself with a deadlier intensity now against its crowning manifestation in the person of the Son of God. In Christ's appearance as the great head of the kingdom of righteousness, there lay the necessity that He should encounter not temptations only, which every man else has done, but the Temptation, which was for One.

For as many indeed as deny that the true name of this Child was 'Wonderful, the Mighty God' (Isaiah ix. 6), it is nothing strange that they should be perplexed and offended at all about his birth which marks Him out as so different from the other children of men, that they should seek to explain away the ideal aspect in which all of the actual presents itself here, to dissipate the nimbus of glory which encircles the Saviour's head even while He is yet this Infant of days. Such gainsaying was to be looked for. But as many as devoutly receive the central fact, the wonder of wonders, namely that this Child was Immanuel, was '*God with us*,' *they* will count that this rather would have been strange and inexplicable, if

heaven had broken forth upon earth, and yet had given no tokens that it was heaven and not earth which was thus blossoming and budding. This indeed would have perplexed *them*, if the newest and most unwonted of all should yet have had nothing new, nothing unwonted about it, nothing to distinguish it from the commonest and most wornout facts of our old and workday world; that He whose name is Wonderful should have appeared, and yet notwithstanding that there should have grouped round Him and his appearing no choir of attendant wonders. They at all events will not take their place with those who will allow nature to have her poetry and her prophecy, but not grace; even the world to have harmonies of its own, heard from time to time above its harsher discords, but not the Church and the kingdom of heaven; who are content that beauty should stand in the service of fiction, but not of truth; who rather, on the instant that they meet it there, count it suspicious, as though of itself it never could have stood in that service, nor done actual homage to Him, from whom notwithstanding all beauty descends, weak shadow and reflex of whose transcendent glory is all of glorious which here we behold.

11. *FEAR OF DEATH.*

'Through fear of death all their life subject to bondage.'
Heb. ii. 15.

O Lord and Prince of Life, Thou that hast been conqueror of death and the grave, what a bondage was that from which Thou didst then deliver the children of men! We, translated by that one victorious act of thine out of the kingdom of darkness and death into the kingdom of light and life, for the most part do but faintly apprehend what the nature and extent of that deliverance was—how earnest and yet how ineffectual the efforts thus far had been to roll away the stone from the sepulchre in which the hopes of the children of men were buried. The revellers might crown their heads with roses, and their bowls with wine, might provoke themselves and one another to mirth, finding a ghastly incentive to a more frantic merriment in the skeleton which they paraded through their banquet halls, and which should serve as a visible remembrancer that even as that was, so they should be

ere long. But there was no sincerity in this mirth of theirs. Death, which should bring so soon the brief revel of life to a close, was the great killjoy of the old heathen world, and by voices and in ways innumerable that world confessed as much, that it may have bred many great, but none great enough for the task which here was before them.

Surely there is no reading so pathetic as that of a collection of Greek and Latin epitaphs. What a voice of anguish and despair speaks out in these, as we listen to one mourner and another,

> 'Who to the grave have followed that they love,
> And on the insuperable margin stand;'

but who feel that they can follow them no further, that these their beloved have trod the irremeable way, entered upon the sleep which knows no waking, and the night which knows no dawn, even as the same unbroken sleep and the same night of darkness would presently encompass themselves.

And even they who did not count this present life to be all and the end of all, who dimly and darkly guessed at another life beyond the grave, they were not thereby delivered from the bondage of this fear, but only exchanged one form of the fear

for another. Their consciences made cowards of them all. What they read in their own books, what their own mythologies told them of punishments prepared for evil-doers, as of the wheel of Ixion, of the stone of Sisyphus, of the whips of the Furies, all these might be fictions of poets, old wives' tales, no better than evil dreams; while yet, as they truly felt, there lay a truth behind them all; a terrible truth whereof these terrors were but the outward and it might be the fantastic setting forth, namely that a day of retribution was coming in which all men should reap the just rewards of their deeds.

Neither fares it thus with the heathen only. The Old Testament saints themselves had not overcome this fear, were not delivered from the bondage of it. For them also this land beyond the grave was a land without form and void, peopled with the mysterious shapes and shadows of their fear. How they mourn in their prayer and are vexed, as they contemplate it, and their own near descent into it. Take Hezekiah, good man as he was, and yet how very far removed from the conclusion to which St. Paul had arrived: 'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' Grant, Lord, that his choice may be ours.

12. *CHRIST'S HEAVINESS.*

'My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death.'—*Mark* xiv. 34.

When the curtain is drawn back, and we for a moment are permitted to behold the awful secrets of Gethsemane, what a spectacle is revealed to us—in many aspects wonderful, but in one aspect most mysterious of all. By his own confession, as the hour draws on, He is anguished, amazed, full of heaviness, exceeding sorrowful. Might it not seem to us as we read, that in this one matter of courage, instead of standing foremost and first, He fell short of many, the Martyrs and Confessors of his own Church; short, for instance, of a Polycarp, a Hus, a Latimer, who each and all went to their fiery death not merely with calm courage, but with gladness and exultation of soul? Nay, are there not others too who in this matter have the advantage over Him? Thus it would be easy to cite examples of bad men, malefactors broken on the wheel or submitted to other horrible tortures, who yet have allowed no cry of weakness to escape them, Indian

braves upon whom all the ingenuity of hellish malice has been exhausted, but from whose lips no confession of suffering has been extorted; while here in this wondrous scene which these words summon up before us the Lord of glory is astonished, does not shrink from confessing that his soul is sorrowful even to death with the anticipation of what is coming; thrice entreats that the cup of mortal anguish may pass away from Him (Matt. xxvi. 44).

It is quite intelligible how all this should perplex many, and seem to demand some explanation; which indeed is not very far to seek. I spoke just now of the courage displayed not seldom by evil men, a courage which oftentimes does not fail them even in the extremities of an agonizing death. If however we trace this courage to its sources, how often we find it owning sources which are not from above, but from beneath. There is indeed courage, but it is the courage of scorn, of pride, of defiance, of hate. If the enemy has conquered, and the man must go down, he will go down as with flying colours to hell. Confession of weakness there shall be none. It is evident that the meek and the lowly One, the Lamb of God, could find no

courage where such as these found theirs; throwing, as this often does, a deceitful splendour, a false halo round them to whom no true glory belongs.

And then too when we compare the bearing of the King of Saints and Martyrs with the bearing of his own servants in circumstances somewhat similar to his own, we must not forget that with all the points of likeness, the points of unlikeness, as between Him and them, were many too; a vast gulf separates Him and them. In the first place death was to the Lord of life a far stranger, a far more terrible thing than to any other among the children of Adam. He saw it more distinctly as the wages of sin, as the expression of God's holy hatred against sin, than any other had ever done. Every other man partially loses sight of this, fails to realize it to the full. It is to us in the natural order of events that we should die; that as we came into the world, so after a period longer or shorter we should quit it. We more or less lose sight of the true character and meaning of death. Not so the Sinless One, who because He *was* this Sinless One, felt and understood what death meant, and why and how it had forced its way into a world of life as none who went before Him

knew, as none who follow after Him shall ever know.

But then let us consider once more—if others have borne themselves valiantly, have quitted them like men, in that mortal agony, it was in the very strength and confidence which He by his contest with death, and his victory over death, had obtained for them. But when He entered on this conflict there was none who had conquered, but all had been conquered. The law of death had never been broken; suspended for a brief period it may have been, but this was all. The question, Who shall roll away the stone from the sepulchre? often asked, remained unanswered still. He, named rightly the Prince of Life, for He alone had won life for Himself and for others, was the Breaker up of the way. After He, the Breaker, had gone up, all was comparatively easy for those who followed. More, I think, need not be said for an explaining of the exceeding heaviness, the astonishment, the sorrow even unto death, which overcame the Lord for a passing while as the hour of his Passion drew near.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

13. *JUDAS ISCARIOT.*

'And he went and hanged himself.'—*Matt.* xxvii. 5.

Repentance and remorse, how terrible is the gulf which divides between these two, terrible well nigh as that which separates heaven and hell—remorse, of the earth earthly, of the flesh fleshly; and if I should add, of the devil devilish, I should scarcely say too much; born as it is, not of grief to have offended a loving Father, and done despite to a Spirit of grace; but born of wounded pride, of anger against ourselves, that the proud idol of self, so long the secret object of our worship, lies by our own act shattered in the dust, and, as we too surely feel, never to be set on its feet again. Remorse, if it have tears at all, they are tears scorching, withering, drying up with their fierce heat every green thing in the soul. But the tears of repentance, when the hard rock of some sinner's heart has been smitten by Christ's cross as by a rod, and these waters gush freely forth, how different an operation is theirs, healing, quickening, reviving

all that they touch and whithersoever they come. Remorse, it is that sorrow of the world whereof the Apostle speaks as a sorrow working death, which literally wrought death in that unhappy one of whom we are meditating now.

A few words on him, and on that end of his. He, the Ahitophel of the New Covenant, and this at once in his sin—for they were alike traitors—and in his self-inflicted doom,—for they were alike self-murderers,—was very far from being the last of those, who finding the central knot of their life inextricably tangled, have counted in a guilty and mad despair, that nothing remained but to cut it, and who thus with profane hand have broken into the bloody house of their own life. As he was not the first, as little is he the last of these; while the number, I believe, of them who have trod upon the verge of this sin, who in utter loathing of a life emptied by their own act of all its glory and its grace, have been almost tempted to seek a grave for themselves; however of God's infinite mercy they have been kept back from this crowning guilt, the number of these is indeed numberless. So terrible a thing is the conscience of sin, when once it has been seen as sin, while yet there is no know-

ledge of it as sin atoned for, and put away; so clinging a curse is this felt, to be likened to nothing so well as to that robe of poison and fire, which the fabled hero of antiquity having in evil hour put on, sought in vain to tear away, until in the clinging anguish of it death seemed to him better than such a long agony as life had grown to be.

O our God, contemplating this fact were it not well that we should make our special prayer to Thee, that with the knowledge of sin there may ever go hand in hand the knowledge of One who has borne that sin, and so borne it that He has borne it away for ever? For when once the arrow of the Almighty has pierced us, there are no charmed words, no medicines which the earth yields, potent enough to cause that barbed arrow to drop from our side. Wheresoever the wounded one, he whom God has wounded, turns, at his uprising and his downlying, in solitudes or in crowds, in the desert or in the city, that arrow clings to him still; and in all the world there is but one physician, the same who smote, that can also heal; there is but one who has the sovereign dittany, at whose prevailing touch the deadly weapon comes away, and the man is whole once more. Seek we then

Him; else for one or another of us that terrible day may arrive which arrived for the unhappy Apostle, when death seems better than life, when the darkest secrets of the world beyond the grave less dreadful than the intolerable anguish of a sin-burdened life.

14. *ESAU.*

'And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him.'—*Gen.* xxxii. 4.

It must be freely owned that a certain transient generosity, and touches no less of a genuine affection, display themselves on Esau's part, when after long years of mutual estrangement he weeps on his brother's neck, resolved to forget all which, if remembered, might have kept them separate for ever. Let him have the honour which for this is his due, even while we stop short of exclaiming with some in modern times, 'Who would not rather be Esau than Jacob?' He has dismissed all purposes of revenge which once he had cherished; does not so much as allude to the old wrong which he had endured; puts back, not without a certain dignity, the gifts by aid of which his brother would fain have secured his favour. He will make no gain of money out of the present pacification; why should he, having already what few persons in the world count that they have, namely enough?

At the same time we must not forget that there

are some who let the sense of wrongs, even the worst, pass from them, not as having chased away by effort and prayer the angry memory of these; but, being as they are incapable of retaining any sentiment for long, this of resentment shares the fate of the others. None can have known Esau better than his mother knew him, and she declared from the beginning, that in a few days his fury would turn away (Gen. xxvii. 44), and so it proved.

There is indeed no mystery about Esau, nothing but what can be read and understood at a glance. He is just what the French call *un brave homme*. The best about him is 'good nature;' but how significant, how characteristic a term is this. 'Good nature,' what is it but nature after all, nature and not grace? And they who set Esau so high, and Jacob so low, should tell us how they reconcile this preference with the express verdict of Holy Scripture about him. As contemplated according to the higher requirements and demands which God makes on men, he is described by the Apostle to the Hebrews in a single word, but one how full of significance, 'a profane person' (Heb. xii. 16), one, in other words, with no sanctuary in his soul, who never kept Sabbath there, with little sense or none

of the privileges so glorious and so unique which were the inheritance of the elect family, and of himself in particular, as the centre of that family, divinely appointed to this honour.

That the prerogatives of the first-born, slighted and despised by him, should pass from him to his younger brother, lay in the very nature and moral necessity of things. The transfer of these from the elder son to the younger was no mere display of the divine sovranty, as some would have it; but had causes that lay much deeper. There were no fitnesses, no predispositions for this in him; but rather the most marked unfitnesses for standing at the head of the great religious movement in which was wrapped up the whole future hope of the world. Even if his heart had been changed, of which there is no token, his inherent unfitnesses would have remained unremoved in the main. Personally he would by this change of heart have become partaker of inestimable blessings; but this personal participation would not have supplied what was deficient in him, what would have shown itself equally deficient in any family or nation which unfolded itself from him.

Indeed if we would know what Esau really was,

the story of that fierce tribe of the desert which claimed him for its progenitor will sufficiently declare it; for a family, a tribe, in all its leading features physical and moral, is wrapped up in its head, and unfolds itself from him. In the Edomites, as Scripture sets them before us, we see an unfolded Esau, an Esau on a larger scale; deteriorated, no doubt, by contact with other races worse than itself; the wild hunter sinking into the wild robber of the desert, and in the end perishing from the face of the earth. Such would have been the inevitable issue; for this is the inexorable destiny of men and of nations, which, gifted with some better qualities by nature, do yet fail to seek a higher consecration for these; this, I say, is their doom; namely, that they shall gradually lose and let go all which at one time was of fairer promise in them, while all which was evil in them developes and strengthens itself more and more. Such a downward progress we trace in Edom. We recognize it, despite of this passing reconciliation, in the ever-increasing alienation of Edom from Israel his brother, growing as this does in the end to the bitterest and most murderous hate (Obad. 10–14; Ps. cxxxvii. 7–9).

15. *RASH JUDGMENTS.*

'Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.'—1 *Cor.* iv. 5.

It was said by one of the saints of old, that there are two immense surprises in store for them who shall be permitted on that great day which is coming to stand before thy throne, to see and to share the gladness of thy chosen. The two surprises, it may be asked, what are they? The answer is itself something of a surprise. It is this —the persons who *are* in heaven, this firstly; and then, secondly, the persons who are *not* there; so little, as in all likelihood, will the actual facts square with our anticipation of them. And first, the persons who may be looked for there, but not found: illustrious theologians, defenders of the faith, upholders of tottering creeds, writers of books with whose fame the whole world has resounded, but whose own hearts, as the end will have made too plain, were all the while untouched by that truth

which they declared to others so well; eloquent preachers on whose lips thousands have hung, who, in accents the most moving, besought others to flee from the wrath to come; but who, alas! forgot to ask that on themselves might be found the cleansing blood. Others too, it may well be feared, shall on that day be sought for, but sought in vain, among the glorious company of the saved ones; such as in many ways shall have done many wonderful works, but against whom the absolute Judge, the Judge of the great final Court of Appeal, shall have uttered the inexorable decree, 'Depart from Me, I never knew you.'

And then on the other side, not less strange and astonishing than the absence of so many will be the presence of so many others, who, when the Lord shall make up his jewels, shall prove to have been precious in his sight. I speak not merely of those, holy and humble men of heart, who wore no glory here, but who shall then shine out as the sun in their Father's kingdom. There shall be others, 'men wondered at,' whose presence among the glorified shall be far more marvellous: prodigals, only too notorious in this present time for the miserable waste which they made of God-given

talents, and concerning whom few, if any, suspected here that they too, by strange mysterious leadings, had found their way to the Heavenly Father's feet—poor Magdalens arrested by some gracious hand as they were treading those steep stairs of infamy, and scorn, and shame, which so surely and so swiftly lead down to the chambers of death; brands snatched from the fire, such as had once lain among the pots, but shining at last (for such grace is with our God) as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers like gold.

But if these things are so, if so many surmises and anticipations upon our part concerning the places which this one and that shall occupy in the kingdom to be revealed, are likely to prove utterly astray, if those first in our esteem are likely in many cases to prove last in God's, and last first, what reason had the great Apostle when he exclaimed, '*Judge nothing before the time.*' The secrets of men's hearts, the hidden undercurrents of men's lives, these are not for us to attempt to lay bare. Thrusting ourselves into seats of judgment which are not ours, what sentences about others, not less cruel than they are unjust, will in all likelihood escape our lips. Enough for

us to await the judgment of a more piercing eye, of a more unerring hand than ours, even thine, O Lord, to whom all judgment belongeth.

It is not that such a day of judgment will never come, a day when all things shall be put upon the square, but only that we must not in our impatience seek to precipitate its coming. It will come of itself. Is not that enough, and more than enough? Many apocalypses there have been, many it is possible are yet to be, revelations of the most hidden things of the hearts of men. But what a revelation shall that be, when Thou that hatest the lie and the liar as Thou hatest the gates of hell, Thou that art the Prince of all purities, touchest each one of us as with thy spear of Ithuriel, and each among us starts up in his proper likeness; wearing, that is, the exact amount of beauty or of ugliness which corresponds to the fair or foul which inwardly are his; the outward and the inward being then, in the kingdom of the truth, what they never are now and here, exactly true, that is, the one to the other.

16. *THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.*

'I am the Light of the World.'—*John* viii. 12.

WHICH of us can have failed to observe how the Lord assumes in these words, as in so many others, as indeed more or less distinctly in all his words, a central position in regard of the whole family of mankind; so that all men stand in a relation to Him in which they do not stand to one another, or to any child of Adam except only to Him? He presents Himself, not as other men are, a point, it may be a most important one, but still a point, in the vast circumference of humanity. He is rather the centre *to* which the lines from every other point converge: *from* which they diffuse themselves again. And then, how different altogether is Christ's self-assertion from the self-negation of every other good and holy man. Every other, in proportion as he is a good man and true, rejoices to make himself nothing, to divest himself of every glory and of every claim. The Baptist was great (we have an angel's word for it), but when his

countrymen asked him, 'Who art thou? what sayest thou of thyself?' the utmost he would claim was, to be 'a voice crying in the wilderness;' he was, he announced, of the earth, and being earthly, spake of the earth, and rejoiced in all words of self-disparagement (John iii. 25–36).

But while he and every other godly man thus abdicates every claim, puts back, at least before God, the honour which others would thrust upon him, while every other makes himself nothing, Christ, on the contrary, makes Himself everything. He puts Himself, I will not say into the foremost rank, for that would faintly express the fact, but into a rank quite by Himself. And yet He who did this, was, as we know, the meek and the lowly One, was clothed with humility, came seeking not his own glory, but the glory of his Father; while for all this no words were too large, no statements too magnificent, for Him to utter in respect of Himself. All the weary and heavy laden in this vast wilderness of woe are to come to Him; He has rest and refreshment for all. He predominates over all human relationships, the nearest and the holiest; to love father or mother better than Him, is not to be worthy of Him. He is the Bread of

God, which therefore men may eat of and not die —the Resurrection and the Life—the Way, the Truth, and the Life—the True Vine—or, as here, '*the Light of the World.*'

Surely this fact, this contrast between Christ's language about Himself, and other good men's language about themselves, may well give room for profound meditations. How many heresies which have torn the Church it ought to have rendered for ever impossible. For how impossible is it to reconcile these declarations of the Lord about Himself with any other view of the dignity of his person save that which the Catholic Church in all ages has held. He is either that which the Church teaches Him to be—or that which we dare not clothe in words. There is no other alternative. If these declarations which Christ makes about Himself are true, then all temporizing positions, Arian, Unitarian, or the like, are such as it is impossible to maintain. Men cannot rest in them for long; but must either rise higher; that is, to the faith of the Church about her Lord; or else sink lower, and renounce the Lord of glory as a deceiver, or a deceived. For as many as accept the Evangelists' record of our Lord's words as perfectly

representing what He did utter, unmodified, uncoloured by prejudices and prepossessions of the relater, every other position but one of these, is one merely of transition, is one logically untenable, is sooner or later discovered to be so, and is abandoned and forsaken.

A man might claim, for instance, to be *a* light, as John 'was a burning and a shining light;' but what man to be *the* light? Or he might claim to be the light of some single age or some single people, though in a very secondary and subordinate sense. But to be 'the Light of the World,' who but the Creator of the world could, without intolerable presumption, such as would convict him not to be light at all, but darkness, claim to be this? Others indeed, who had caught some scattered rays of his brightness before He rose visibly above the horizon, had been the light of this land or of that; of this age or the other; but, as was just said, in how secondary and subordinate a sense! They brought *truths*, but they never brought *the truth*, to their fellowmen; for the truth is one, whole and complete, and to bring it was reserved for Him, who *has* the truth, because He *is* the Truth." And then, the truths which they brought, those fragments broken

from the entire body of the Truth, how far mixed with falsehoods they were, how much weakened by contradictions, by contradictions in the teaching, by contradictions in the lives, of those that brought them. Extensively, over what narrow regions the spiritual dominion which they wielded, reached; intensively, how few the hearts which owned homage to them, and oftentimes how slight the homage which they owned. But He with whom we have here to do, is the Light of the whole world. 'His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.'

17. *THE CALLINGS OF CHRIST.*

'He calleth unto Him whom He would; and they came unto Him.'—*Mark* iii. 13.

We are told of Saul, but of Saul not fallen as yet from the prerogatives of his kingly estate, that as often as he saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto himself (1 Sam. xiv. 52), and that in this way he recruited the ranks of the host of the Lord. Surely we have a faint foreshadowing here of what Thou, true King of men, Lord and lover of souls, didst in the days of thy flesh, what Thou art doing still as Thou walkest up and down in thy Church, and seest one and another apt for thy kingdom, able to do exploits; whom thereupon Thou biddest to follow Thee as their captain, and to war a good warfare under thy banner. Infinite too was the variety of devices, the ever-changing means and methods, which Thou usedst in days of old, and usest still, for the winning of souls to Thyself, and, these once won, for the keeping of them thine to the end.

Shall we not praise Thee, our Saviour and our

God, for a wisdom like this, clothing itself in so many shapes and so various? For indeed it is the mark of a narrow unloving spirit, or at all events of one not greatly loving, when it has but one method of dealing with all diversities of souls. Such was not thy manner once, and is not so now. Thou mayest, it is true, do the same thing many times over; how indeed couldst Thou avoid this? but yet at the same time Thou doest it in fashions how different. Nowhere is this diversity more gloriously shown than in thine after dealings with them who stand forth as leaders and standard-bearers in thy Church, and the great features of whose after history are recorded in thy word.

While Thou wast yet in the flesh, what contrasts revealed themselves in thy dealings with thine own! One is bidden to proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God, and the wondrous things in that kingdom which God had done for him. Another has the seal of silence impressed upon his lips, that so, instead of losing himself in an endless garrulity, launching upon a shoreless ocean of talk, he may brood in silence over the wondrous secrets of that divine love which has so helped him and healed him. Some, like the jailer of Philippi, are born out

of the old world of wrath and wrong into the new kingdom of light and love; but with such perilous birth-pangs that for a while it has seemed doubtful lest what was meant for an entrance into life might not prove very different from this, and have its issues of death (Acts xvi. 27–30); while others, like the purple-seller of Thyatira, so far as we can see, glide without an effort into the kingdom of grace, He who has the key of David opening their hearts to attend to his message of life. In the same way there are apostles formed and fashioned by the patient labour of years; others again for whom in one marvellous instant Thou makest all things new —*fusile* Apostles, as one excellently has called them —the same lightning from heaven which melted, moulding them as well. And then, as each occasion calls, what a wealth of means and methods is thine for the repelling of this one, for the attracting of that; knowing, as Thou dost, whom to repel for a while, and whom to attract.

O Thou who hast ever shown Thyself well skilled to detect the precious stone that lurks in the unsightly pebble, the fisher of men lying hid in the snarer of the dumb creatures of the deep, Thou who sawest in the tentmaker the builder of fairer

habitations, who didst recognize Paul in Saul, Matthew the Apostle in Levi the publican, Israel in Jacob, Cephas in Simon, find, if Thou canst, something which shall compel even me, who have stood out so long, to yield to the potent attractions of thy love. Draw Thou me, and I shall follow. Draw me by love or by fear, or, better still, by a twofold cord made up of both; for if only I wake up at the last in thy likeness, I shall quarrel with none of the steps, neither with the holy violence nor the holy guile, wherewith Thou hast led me at last to a joy ineffable and full of glory.

LIBRARY OF THE ROYAL BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ASIATIC

18. *SUBJECTION TO VANITY.*

'The creature was made subject to vanity.'—*Rom.* viii. 20.

YEA, Lord, it is even so. There are ten thousand witnesses within us and without, setting their seal to the truth of this word of thine Apostle. That the whole framework of nature and of man has been jarred, dislocated, and disordered, this everything within him and everything about him alike declares. Everywhere there is that in his moral and spiritual condition which compels us to argue back to some immense catastrophe, such as that of the Fall, which alone explains what he is, and what he is striving to be. There is, to borrow an image from the language of natural science, a *fault* here in the strata of the moral universe, which attests some such obscure convulsion, reaching back in its date to those ancient days, when the foundations of all his later history were being laid. How else but by some revolution of this kind, can we account for the huge contradictions which meet in him, the

higher in him serving the lower, the nobler the baser, the spirit doing drudging work for the flesh, his faculties so transcendent failing to find their corresponding objects, and squandering themselves often on objects the meanest and the vilest? How else account for his alternate dominion over, and bondage beneath, that world in which he lives? Or again, how else explain his restless disquietude? how else the immeasurable gulf between what he does, and what he recognizes that he ought to do —attested as this is by shame, repentance, and remorse—he carrying about within himself his own judge, his thoughts accusing or excusing one another? In what other way account for that intimate relation in which he stands to two worlds, and those the most opposite, a world above him and a world beneath; he receiving impressions, inspirations, from both, airs from heaven and blasts from hell, his soul a bride which both are wooing for their own?

What means it, 'this visible brokenness of the universal order,' as one has described it well, if there be not some strange mystery about him, if there be not some old guilt resting on the family of man, if 'neither this man did sin nor

his parents,' that oftentimes man should stagger under such a weight of woe from his cradle to the grave? What means it that for him there should be a grave at all—that he, with the instincts of immortality, with thoughts wandering through eternity, should yet be the creature of a day, and, that brief day ended, should turn again to his dust, and all his thoughts perish? If death is indeed the proper end of life, appointed to it from the beginning, why does he shrink shuddering from it, why should all the circumstances of it be so painful and so terrible, why is it not rather a sleep and a forgetting, and man's return to the earth out of which he was formed, as the peaceful sinking of a weary child into its mother's lap?

What can we make of all this, so long as we attempt to read it by any other light than that of Revelation? A famous prophet of our own, who in his well-known *Essay on Man* refused to read the story of man by that light, but only by a little glimmering taper of his own, could feel the difficulty of man's position and destiny, but could not solve it. Many will remember Pope's lines, in which he confesses as much—

'Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise, and rudely great,
With too much knowledge for the Sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest,
In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast,
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reasoning but to err:
Created half to rise, and half to fall,
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled,
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!'

Even so; himself the riddle, which under direst penalties he must attempt to solve, the mysterious sphinx of creation; but not, like that fabled monster of old, imposing upon others, rather finding imposed upon himself, the enigma for which some interpretation must be found. It is woe to him if he put back the one interpretation which it is capable of receiving, and which the Scriptures of truth offer. Let him accept that, and all will fall into its proper place, all will become intelligible again. Those strange contradictions meet in him, because he by an act of his own has planted contradiction in the very centre of his life. He is at once the lord of nature and its slave, because dominion over it was given him at the first, which now through his own fault has partially escaped

from his hands. He can rise so high, because he was made in the likeness and image of God; he can fall so low, because he has given place to the devil, and yielded himself to be the organ of his will. He is ill at ease, because he has forsaken his true centre: and God, in his mercy, will not let it be well with him anywhere except with Him. He is burdened and heavy laden, because sin and sorrow, however they may tarry apart for a while, yet must find one another out at the last. Shame and remorse are his portion, dreadful yet blessed witnesses of a law which he can violate indeed, but cannot refuse to allow that it is good, and that he was bound to obey it. He shrinks from the prospect of death, because he was not made for death, but for immortality. He dies, because he has renounced the rule of that spirit which should have distinguished him from the beasts that perish, and having set himself on their level, it is only just that he should share their doom—a doom most natural for them, most unnatural for him. His frame, so marvellously constructed, turns to dust, by a decree at once severe and merciful; severe, because it is the fulfilment of the sentence of a righteous Judge; merciful, because the fretting

leprosy of sin had so penetrated and pervaded for him the earthly house of this tabernacle, that only on the condition of its being taken down altogether, could a new house, a house which is from heaven, have ever been reared in its stead.

19. *THE FATHER'S PLEASURE IN THE PASSION OF HIS SON.*

'It pleased the Lord to bruise Him.'—*Isai.* liii. 10.

HERE, as so often, the faith of the Church is by not a few first caricatured, that so it may more easily be found in fault. Could God, it is asked with a certain indignation, have pleasure in the sufferings of the innocent and the holy? Assuredly not; but He could have pleasure, nay, according to the moral necessities of his own being, He must have pleasure, yea, the highest satisfaction and delight, in the love, the patience, the obedience, which those sufferings gave his the opportunity of displaying, such as else they could never have displayed; above all, He must have rejoiced in these as manifested in his own Son. For even we ourselves, when we read in story of those who for the love of their fellows have made their own lives one long patient martyrdom, or who, witnessing for the truth, have been borne from earth in the fire-chariot of some shorter but sharper agony, do we not feel that we have a right

to rejoice in these martyrs of truth and love, yea, in the very pains and sufferings which they endured? that only as the nerves of our own moral being are weak and unstrung, only as we have become incapable not merely of doing, but even of appreciating, what is noble, do we grudge them these pains; seeing that these were the conditions of their greatness, without which it could never have been shown, without which it might never have existed?

Even the heathen moralist could say of God in his dealings with good men, '*fortiter amat*;' there is no weakness in his love; it is love according to which He does not spare his own, but thrusts them forth to labours and pains, wherein alone they can be perfected. And should not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ have pleasure in the faith, the love, the obedience of his Son? Yea, it was a joy such as only the mind and heart of God could conceive, that in his Son this perfect pattern of self-forgetting, self-offering love was displayed. We do not shrink from accepting in the simplest sense the assertion of the Apostle, that Christ, giving Himself for us on the Cross, became therein and thereby 'a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour' unto God.

Christ satisfied herein—not the divine anger—but the divine craving after a perfect righteousness and obedience in man, a craving which none other had satisfied, but all had disappointed thus far. There had been a flaw in every other man's scutcheon; every other, instead of repairing the breach which Adam made, had left that breach wider than he found it. But here at length was One, a son of man, yet fairer than all the children of men, One on whom the Father's love could rest with a perfect complacency, about whom He could declare, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And that life of his, the long self-offering of that life of love, was crowned and completed by the sacrifice of his death, wherein He satisfied to the uttermost every demand which God could make on Him, and satisfied for all the demands which God had made upon all the other children of men, and which they had not satisfied for themselves.

But if the question is here raised, How could one man satisfy for many? how by one man's obedience could many be made righteous? the answer is not far to seek. The transcendent worth of that obedience which Christ rendered, of that oblation which He offered, the power which it

possessed of counterbalancing a world's sin, lay in this, that He who offered these, while He bore a human nature, was a Divine person; not indeed God only, for as such He would never have been in the condition to offer; nor man only, for then the worth of his offering could never have reached so far; but that He was God and man in one person indissolubly united, and in this person performing all those acts, man that He might obey and suffer and die, God that He might add to every act of his obedience, of his suffering, of his death, an immeasurable worth, steeping in the glory of his divine personality all of human that He wrought. Christ was able so summarily to pay our debt, because He had another and a higher coin in which to pay it than that in which it had been contracted. It was contracted in the currency of earth; He paid it in the currency of heaven. Nor was it that God arbitrarily imputed to Christ's obedience a value which made it equal to the needs and sins of the world, such a value as it would not have had but for this imputation. We affirm rather with those who crave to deal with realities, not with ascriptions and imputations, that his offering had in itself this intrinsic value, that there was no ascription to it, as

by God's mere pleasure, of a value which it did not in itself possess; for then the same might have been imputed to the work of an angel or of a saintly man; the whole exclusive fitness of the Son of God undertaking the work would then pass away; and another might have made good the breach as well as He. We affirm rather that what the Son of God claimed in behalf of that race whereof He had become the representative and the Head, He claimed as of right—although, indeed, that right was one which the Father as joyfully conceded as the Son demanded. Without a satisfaction such as this the eternal interests of that righteousness whereof God is the upholder in his own moral universe would not have permitted Him to be, as He now is, the passer by of transgression, the justifier and accepter of the ungodly.

20. *SIN'S DOMINION.*

'Keep thy servant also from presumptuous sins, lest they get the dominion over me.'—*Ps.* xix. 13.

The fact that there is a kingdom of darkness around us as well as a kingdom of light, that we have affinities with the one no less than with the other, that sins no less than graces are linked together by a mysterious law, it is this which reveals to us the deep significance of the Psalmist's prayer. It is this which forbids us to believe that any sin, wilfully admitted into a heart, will remain quiescent there; nay, makes us sure that it must stir and move, must cast forth roots and fibres on different sides, must gradually vitiate and corrupt portions hitherto sounder and sincerer of the life no less than that part which it originally claimed for its own. And not merely *some* portions, but *all*. For oftentimes a ruling sin will have power little by little to colour the whole life with its own tints; to assimilate everything there to itself—as in ever wider circles to absorb all into its own vortex, being

as it were a gulf, into which all which was better and nobler in the man is irresistibly attracted, and is there swallowed up, and for ever disappears.

There are many sins which have this absorbing character, whose property it is ever to encroach more and more on the regions of the moral and spiritual life not as yet possessed by them, never content till they have reared their trophies on the wreck and ruin of every nobler faculty and power, which once the man might call his own. All sins perhaps have more or less this character; yet we may signalise two or three, concerning which it is eminently true that they are spreading, encroaching, more and more taking possession of the whole man. Vanity is such a sin. This may seem to us often little worse than a harmless foible; yet physicians tell us that there is almost no sin which yields more inmates to the madhouse than does this; and how many through it shall have missed the crown of life only the last day shall declare. The love of money is another such a sin, growing by what it feeds on; and ever claiming to exercise a wider, a fiercer, a more relentless tyranny and dominion in the soul where it rules as lord; ever resenting more and more any freedom of action,

any generosity in dealing, any open-handedness in giving, any bowels of compassion shown on the part of him, who meant indeed to give allowance to this sin, but only up to a certain point, had no intention at the first that it should bear sway in his heart and life as sole and absolute and tyrannous master and lord.

Lusts of the flesh, indulged and allowed, prove oftentimes sins of this same character; have a fearful tendency to become such. And then what a hideous tyranny will theirs be! In the nature of things, sin in act will be only from time to time; but, perhaps more defiling still, as more cold-blooded, sin in thought and imagination may be, and often will be, almost continual. What a work-shop of unholy impure fancies will the heart of the man be who has given himself over to this spirit of uncleanness! The unholy fires which have been kindled there, how will they in their fierce devouring hunger be seeking everywhere and in everything for the pabulum which should nourish, the fuel which should feed them! There is nothing for such a man which will not be made to minister to impurity; 'having eyes full of adultery, which cannot cease from sin.' By a dreadful alchemy of

hell he will extract what is foul from the fairest; what will yield healthful nourishment to others will only yield poison to him. Noble books of antiquity, or famous poems of the modern world, if there should be, alas! one and another tainted spot in them, passing over whatever of pure and elevating and ennobling they may offer, he will fasten upon this, as one who can feed upon rottenness and corruption, and can feed only upon these. O fearful condition of him, for whom all which contributes most to the beauty of earth, or which will go far to constitute the glory of heaven, the purity of womanhood, the innocency of children, the continence of manhood, is as something which he would fain cause to disappear; for it stands in his way, its mere presence rebukes him, who now knows of no other joys than those which are to be found in the sty of Epicurus, and the wallowing in the mire. O fearful condition of him for whom no simple pleasures, no pure delights exist any more; whom nothing can please which has not the serpent's slime upon it; to whom literally 'nothing is pure,' for his very 'mind and conscience is defiled.'

21. *SINS OF OTHERS AND OF OUR OWN.*

'Partakers of other men's sins.'—1 *Tim.* v. 22.

BEYOND a doubt these words may well lead us to great searchings of heart. The sins which we ourselves have committed constitute a catalogue long enough and sad enough, without the addition of any others to the list. And yet we must add a further unknown quantity to these, if we would give any sort of completeness to that dreary and doleful catalogue. There are other sins besides these, sins in one sense not properly ours, as not having been actually of our own commission, but our share in the responsibility of which we have not therefore escaped, and must not seek to elude; partakers as we are in their guilt, and thus in due time and measure to be partakers of their punishment. But are there, some may ask, any such sins indeed? That such there are, and that they are not overlooked and forgotten, of this we have only too

certain proof, if indeed there needed any further proof than that which our own accusing conscience supplies.

It is indeed not for us to think lightly of the guilt which we may thus contract. The title by which Jeroboam, founder of the schismatic Church of the Calves, is named in Scripture, as the man, that is, who not merely sinned himself, but who 'made Israel to sin,' furnishes a very solemn proof of the gravity of the guilt in the sight of God which they contract who transgress after the likeness of his transgression. To his name there cleaves the brand of a perpetual dishonour. Again and again he is described as Jeroboam 'which made Israel to sin' (1 Kin. xiv. 16; xv. 30). This is the prominent fact about him, the first point which strikes the mind of an inspired historian who has occasion to name him. He is the man who involved a multitude of others—a nation, a Church shall we call it?—in mortal sin. Whoever else may forget, may care little or care nothing at all for this act of his, God cares; He has not forgotten, and by this recurring refrain lets it plainly appear that He has not so done; that souls are precious to Him, and that those by whom souls perish, at

once seduced and seducing, shall have a very solemn account to settle with Him.

But not pausing here, let us seek to measure in thought and imagination what in God's sight must be the guilt of one who has launched some evil book, corrupting and defiling, upon the world. He may repent the deed when it has become too late to recall it. We know of a famous Italian novelist that he would have so done in the matter of a volume of wanton tales, the heritage of ill which he has bequeathed to after generations of men. But this might not be; the attempt was in vain. To plant a poisonous upas tree may not prove so difficult; but it is quite a different thing to cut it down or root it up. What was fatally easy once, has grown, and in how brief a time, to be fatally hard. The head that planned, the hand that penned the volume, may have long since forgotten their cunning, may have turned again to that dust from which they were moulded at the beginning; but the book lives on, again and again to attest to the truth of that homely proverb which says, There is no such robber as a bad book. There is indeed none. Other books may rob their readers of things in their own way precious—of time, of money, or

of other valuables; but the wicked book robs of things which in their nature are invaluable, which once lost can never be wholly gotten back again.

In how many other ways may we harm our neighbour without directly intending it. They, for instance, who sat in the idol temple, who partook in the idol meats at Corinth, may have had no intention of sharing in the idolatrous rites of the heathen round them; all which they meant may have been to please themselves, to put forward a visible proof of their superiority in the matter of idol ceremonies over those around them. This was what they intended. What they actually did, in what measure they became '*partakers of other men's sins*,' only the great day which is coming shall declare.

22. *CHRIST KNOCKING.*

'I stand at the door and knock.'—*Rev.* iii. 20.

Dost Thou indeed stand at the door of my heart; dost Thou knock and claim entrance there? If this, if nothing less than this, is the fact, what an infinite condescension is here, what a strange and marvellous reversal of all the ordinary dealings of the Divine love; but only a reversal that so these dealings may shine forth more gloriously than ever else they would have done. Otherwhere Thou hast said, 'I am the Door' (John x. 9). Thou hast bidden us to knock at the gate of heaven, and hast promised that we should not knock in vain. But all is altered here. It is Thou who standest without, as one exposed to all the inclemency of the midnight air; it is Thou who art content to wait our leisure, and to make proof whether the time has not at length arrived when we shall be no longer in arms and at strife with our own blessedness—but shall yield ourselves, vanquished indeed, but the vanquished of Almighty Love.

We have indeed a hint of the Divine long-suffering here; which not merely knocks, and then, if it be not opened to it at once, goes away and leaves us to ourselves, to our own impenitency and hardness of heart; but Thou rather, as one who knows that he has a message which it supremely concerns men that they should receive, who will therefore take no denial, knockest, and not being admitted, knockest again, with all the importunity of love. Has it not been even so? In our childhood Thou hast said to us, Give Me thy tender years—years with the dew of the morning upon them. Grow up like Samuel in my immediate presence, and know the blessedness of them who have been with Me from the first. And then when childhood was gone, given to vanity, Thou hast pleaded with us again, Give Me thy youth and strength, the flower of thine age. And when youth was presently squandered in folly or in worse, Thou hast pleaded with us, unwearied still, Give Me thy ripe manhood, the fullness of thine years, the autumn harvest, even though the flowers of spring and the fruits of summer were ungathered. Though the past may be lost, the present and the future may still be thine; at once mine and thine, if only thou wilt

hear my voice, and open now; and in place of the 'lords many and gods many,' that have throned themselves hitherto in the profaned sanctuary of thine heart, wilt receive Me, the true Lord of thy life, for whom that heart was created at the first, and therefore in whom alone it can find its abiding repose.

Will any venture to gainsay this word; will any venture to reply, I have never known aught of this knocking; this mysterious voice has never uttered itself to spiritual ear of mine? But is it indeed so? Hast thou then never had thy times of gracious visitation? Assuredly we all have had them, and not a few. We may indeed have missed them and their meaning altogether; but the times themselves not the less have been ours; times of a great joy, and times of a great sorrow; times when our God has given to us so much, and times when He has taken away so much; times of weary sickness, and times of unlooked-for recovery, times when Thou hast made a hedge about us, given to us 'the household of continuance,' no ominous hour for long years knocking at our door with its tidings of mishap; or times when Thou hast broken in upon us with breach upon

breach and sorrow upon sorrow—times when Thou hast made us to enter on the miserable possession of our past sins—times when Thou hast said concerning us, 'Loose him and let him go,' and we have walked in the glorious liberty of the children of God—times when the world was sweet unto us, and when the world was bitter; times when we walked, compassed with troops of friends, and times when lonely paths were appointed for our treading; Thou in one shape or another spreading a feast for us still, or more wonderful yet, deigning to share the feast which we have spread for Thee; we saying to Thee, 'Thou art my God,' and Thou to us in the reciprocities of heavenly love, which at once knows and is known, 'Thou art my son.' Has not our God been speaking to us in all this joy and in all this sorrow? Shall we venture to say that of all this He has done nothing?

23. *THE WOMAN PRESSED IN AN EPHAH.*

'This is Wickedness, and he cast it into the midst of the ephah.'
Zech. v. 8.

THIS vision, last of a mystic seven, may present itself to us as hard to be understood except by a very few; and, even if understood, as lying remote from the immediate circle of our spiritual interests. But both of these judgments about it would be erroneous. The vision of the woman pressed in the ephah has its teaching, and that a teaching for us all. But what, it may be asked, is that teaching, wherewith not without profit we may concern ourselves here? A reply to this question must be sought from the lips of the interpreting angel, who stands by the prophet, and explains to him each several vision as it passes before the prophet's eye.

First, then, there is shown to him in the spirit an ephah. This ephah plays so prominent a part in the symbolism of the present vision that it may be well to mention here that this so named is a Jewish measure; the largest, indeed, which was in use

among the Jews, and thus the fittest to fulfil the purposes which lead to its introduction as part of the actual imagery here. When first displayed to the prophet this ephah is sealed at the mouth with a heavy talent of lead. For a brief moment the weight is removed—by the angel, as we may fitly conclude, and there is then seen sitting in the midst of the measure a woman. It is but a passing glimpse which is vouchsafed to the seer; and the woman, '*Wickedness*' as the angel explains her to be justly named, is forcibly thrust back again into the ephah (somewhat as Farinata in Dante's *Inferno* into his fiery tomb), which is closed upon her anew, no choice being hers but to remain in her 'little ease' and there fulfil the measure of her punishment, whatever that may be.

The first scene of the judgment act is completed; but the second still remains. And now two women, hitherto unperceived by the prophet, but indeed executresses of the Divine judgment, as is presently made manifest, appear upon the scene. They are two, because for less than two the task of lifting and carrying away so heavy a weight would have seemed impossible; and even in a vision it is desirable to maintain the same proportion and

fitness of things which reigns in the actual world. They are women, because she that is personified in the vision is a woman too. Wings are ascribed to them; and, having respect to the burden which it will be their task to lift, these wings broad and strong as the wings of a stork—itself, as it may be worth while to observe, an unclean bird (Lev. xi. 19). Then, too, power not their own is lent to them; the wind is in their wings; and lifting up the ephah without an effort, they cleave their way between the earth and the heaven—the utter helplessness of her who is so borne in the matter of resistance being that which is worthiest of notice here.

We may imagine the unsightly ephah with its ill-omened load, but sustained by those mighty vans, to have quickly passed out of sight. '*Whither do these bear the ephah?*' is the question which naturally springs from the lips of the inquiring prophet. The reply, '*To build it an house in the land of Shinar,*' sounds enigmatic enough at the first hearing, but is capable of no very difficult solution, so soon as we realize the fact that the 'land of Shinar' is here an ethical and symbolical not a geographical term (Gen. x. 10; xi. 2). It need not be observed how frequent in Holy

Scripture is the same attribution of a moral or mystical significance to certain lands or places, as to Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, Mount Zion. To lose sight of this would be often to lose sight of much, to empty of significance that which properly studied would be found to be full of this. Thus Shinar is no local Shinar that is here intended, but rather that profane land where, long ages before, Nimrod and the impious Babel-builders had sought to carry out a God-defying counsel of their own, to set up a city of confusion over against the true City of God. This scheme of theirs, defeated then, was yet not so defeated, but that during the long periods of the Church's development, and until the winding up of the present age, there should be city against city, a mystery of iniquity as well as a mystery of godliness; and this no transient apparition, but such a city rather as will stand through long ages, for, as is expressly declared, '*it shall be established, and set there upon her own base*;' yet not established so but that God with mighty judgment-acts should separate between the two, the holy and the profane, and give token by symbolic acts such as that which the prophet has just beheld, whither all things in his Church are tending, and

what the consummation of all should be. The anti-christian power in the world may struggle long and fiercely, but there will come a day when 'Bind him hand and foot and take him away' shall be spoken to every guest without a marriage garment; a time when '*Wickedness*,' gathered up to a head, shall in that head receive its final doom; and of all this the prophecy is here.

24. *THE GREAT REFUSAL.*

'Go up higher.'—*Luke* xiv. 10.

How often at one or another crisis and turning-point of our spiritual life, Thou, sole Dispenser of honour or dishonour in thy Church, sayest to one of us, '*Go up higher,*' and alas! how often we reply, not perhaps in so many words, but yet in deed, that we are quite content to tarry on such heights as we have gained already, that the air of those loftier summits to which Thou biddest us, may be clearer, but it is also more difficult to breathe, that we have no ambition to ascend to these. How many a '*Go up higher*' comes to us which either we fail to hear, or hearing fail to obey.

I include not among these the ordinary incentives to a closer walk with God, which it is to be hoped do in their measure visit us all; and which, though they may not bring about in us any mighty transformation, yet do their part in preventing us from sinking altogether below the level of ordinary religion. I speak rather of rarer moments, times

such as the mystic poet of the East must have had in his eye, and the sin of neglecting which he must have deeply felt, when he wrote,—

> 'All skirts extended of thy mantle hold,
> When angel hands from heaven are scattering gold.'

But this '*Go up higher*' often links itself on to special dealings of our God with us; these differing from one another in marvellous ways. There are who have been initiated into the solemn mysteries of pain, who have a little made proof of the dread capacities for suffering with which these mortal frames of ours are endowed. Surely there was a voice which reached us on that bed of languishing, in those weary days and weary nights, and that voice no other than his who invites his own to a nearer fellowship with Himself and with his cross, that so with this cross as with a sword of the Spirit we might smite and shatter the world-idols which had so often enticed us to worship them, and to lavish upon them the service due to God and to Him alone.

But neither is it these only to whom such words as I have just suggested have been addressed. There are other schools of trial, besides that of physical suffering, to which Thou, Captain as Thou

111236

art of the crucified, introducest thine own, bidding them to take the places designed for them there. Thou settest them in solitudes—and there are no solitudes like the solitudes of crowds; Thou takest away the desire of their eyes with a stroke, appointest unto them lonely hours and days and years, strikest the fresh garlands of hope from their brows; and for them, still young it may be in years, the glory and the gladness of life has for ever departed; while alas! it not always follows that they understand what all this may mean; and why Thou hast brought them into the wilderness, and wouldest speak with them there.

I have no wish to exaggerate. I would not imply that in every such failure to 'go up higher' on the part of one invited to this, there is the defeat of a life, the loss of a soul. God forbid! This *may be* involved. Such a missing of thy purpose concerning us may be the beginning of a falling away, which advancing step by step may result in a final apostasy from Thee. But far short of this, is it not catastrophe enough, an argument for angels' tears, when one meant for grander things acquiesces in meaner; when one who might have stood on a highest step of the

throne, in the inner circle of light, accepts a place in the dimmer and remoter circumference? I have no right to urge matters so far; but assuredly this stands fast, namely that in the kingdom of heaven, both here and hereafter, there are high places and there are higher. God has good gifts and He has perfect gifts. Even now, saw we all things as they truly are, we should see that in his kingdom there is nothing of that tame uniformity which we sometimes ascribe to it, as though all the saved stood upon the same level. In one sense they do so; all are saved by faith; but in another there are high and higher, steps and gradations, an infinite variety—and they who fall short of the first, it is by no means certain that they will fall short of all.

But all this freely admitted, it is a perilous thing for any to have made what, borrowing a phrase from Dante, I will call 'the great refusal.' The Italian poet in his *Divine Comedy* speaks of one who had made it. This is all which he tells us about him—not his name, nor his doom, which was unnecessary, nor yet what 'the great refusal' was. But the words in all likelihood are meant for one, not long dead when the poet

wrote; who being called to the highest throne in the Church, where he might have wrought much for the cleansing of the sanctuary, did yet out of timidity or unwillingness to change his manner of life, or lack of all noble ambition, or some other meaner motive, shrink back and decline the office to which in the providence of God he had been led. Many, it is much to be feared, in that great dividing day which is coming, will be found, who, invited by open or secret monitions of thine, O Lord, will yet have made, like him, 'the great refusal'—*how many* these shall prove, only that day itself shall declare.

25. *GOD'S JUDGMENTS A GREAT DEEP.*

'Thy judgments are a great deep.'—*Ps.* xxxvi. 6.

WHO will deny it? Some of those who have departed from God He appears to leave to themselves. So many warnings, it may be, have been already despised by them, so many checks of conscience overborne, that it would only increase their guilt if these were multiplied further. Concerning them it might seem as if the decree had gone forth, 'Let them alone—why should they be smitten any more?' And, most dreadful judgment of all, they *are* let alone. They settle down in that far country where God is not. Oftentimes they become prosperous, well-to-do citizens of the land very far off. They are visited, so far as human eye can see, with no homesickness, with no remembrance of a Father's house which they have forsaken, and a Father's love which they have despised. It is never given to them to sit down on the ground in that blessed despair which is as the night out of which a blessed morn may break, never to exclaim

with the Prodigal, 'I perish with hunger.' They come into no misfortune like other folk; and when, as happens with so many, the profligacies of youth, forsaken but alas! not repented, have been changed for the decent proprieties of a later age, all men speak well of them; and so they prosper in this world, and call the lands by their own names, and have children at their desire, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes; and they die, as it would seem, in a good old age, and are honourably buried; and they are praised in this world, and tormented in hell.

He who knows all hearts, who may see in me a possible jewel for his crown, though it has lain so long in the mire, who will not relinquish his purpose of making this sinful heart of mine his own, He may indeed spare me that dreadfullest of all dooms—namely, the unpunished prosperity which is so often the portion of reprobate men. He may pursue me, a fugitive from Him; He may bring me back from this flight. But by what means shall this in all likelihood be? As He brought back Jonah of old, when he too fled from the task of his life, from the face of his Lord, seeking to hide himself from Him, He may pursue and overtake me

with all his storms; bring me back to Himself, but not until all his waves and storms have gone over me, till the depths have closed round about me, so that if saved at all I shall be saved as by a miracle, the jaws of hell yielding back their prey; and I, knowing no abundant entrance into life, shall be cast shivering, stript, and naked, upon the eternal shore.

Thou, O my soul, wilt bless God even for this; for indeed what love it is, what faithfulness in Him, when He will not suffer us to forget our own people and our Father's house; when He brings the soul which has forsaken Him into sore straits, into distresses (they may be outward distresses or they may be inward, or they may be both together), when He will not allow the sinner to be at ease in his sin; empties him from vessel to vessel, breaks his idols, disappoints his ambitions, hedges up his way with thorns, mixes gall and wormwood with his honey, or makes that honey itself to pall and be loathsome; when he causes a man's friends to forsake him, his enemies to rise up against him, the reeds on which he has leant to break beneath him or to pierce him—God Himself meeting him as an adversary, making him to be empty and desolate;

empty that so in his emptiness he may seek to Him who is the eternal fulness, desolate, that so he may come at length, weary and heavy laden, to lay the intolerable burden of his life at the feet of Him who only can bear that burden for him, and who will not refuse so to do; laying on the sinner in return his own light burden and easy yoke. Sad doom, even this; and yet how immeasurably better than that unpunished prosperity of evil men, who have no sorrows in their life nor bands in their death, for whom all things go well except that one thing, which in the end shall be all. Avert from me, O Lord, that doom.

26. *JOASH.*

'Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times.'—2 *Kin.* xiii. 19.

Alas! how often we sin after the likeness of the sin of this Israelitish king. With what a lesson for every one of us this his story is charged, this failure upon his part to rise to the height of a great occasion, and one which, once missed, could never be recalled. Elisha—for no less a one than he is the 'man of God' who is speaking here—was now going the way of all the earth; he 'was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died;' and Joash the king of Israel, who obscurely apprehended the immensity of the loss impending on him and on his people, came to take a last farewell of the dying prophet; the sense of his unutterable loss clothing itself in words not now for the first time heard (cf. 2 Kin. ii. 12): 'O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.'

But the time was no time for empty lamentations. Little of that time remained, but little as it was, some work for God might be wrought in it:

and we read at some length of the work which was wrought in it; how the prophet bade the king to take bow and arrows, and to shoot; he himself putting his hands on the king's hands, so to indicate that the work thus done was God's work; while, to make this plainer still, he accompanied the act with interpreting words which should reveal all its significance: that the arrow which he shot was the arrow of the Lord's deliverance, sign, token, and pledge of victory over the Syrians who had held the Lord's people in captivity for so many shameful years. This done, and the explanation given, he bade the king to take other arrows and to smite, or, more accurately, to shoot again, not doubting that the other would understand what he was now summoned to do. But the feeble king only half believed in the work which he was bidden to share, and after three arrows launched he stayed his hand. Thereupon follow the words from which we started: the man of God was displeased, his displeasure finding utterance in that exclamation: 'Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.'

This, like all else in Scripture, was written for

our learning; and the lesson which is wrapped up in it is not far to seek. Surely there has been something only too nearly resembling this in the spiritual life-history of too many among us; and is it not very likely that there will be something only too like this again? For there is brought up before us here not a man disobedient; commanded to do one thing, and doing another. Had it been so, there would not have been half, nay, not the fiftieth part of the warning in this Scripture which now it contains. I take a case, by no means an uncommon one. There has been in one or another of us a long and mighty struggle with some master-passion, which at one time threatened to bring the whole man into bondage. By faith and prayer victory has been gained at last—so far at least that there is no longer a life-and-death conflict before us, in which everything is at stake. But we—for I will assume the case to be ours—are ignobly content. We have escaped with life, and that is enough. We are not abject slaves of the sin, and we ask no more. There is no following up of our successes. We repeat the fault of too many captains and commanders, who can win a battle, but have not known how to improve it, how

to press upon the broken rear of the enemy, and thoroughly to complete what was well begun; who therefore have failed to gather the full fruits of our victories, have seen not seldom these fruits to escape us altogether. How often we fail as they fail, and when Thou hast given us at length the mastery of this lust, that passion, instead of pursuing, overtaking, treading it under our feet for ever, we suffer it to retreat into safe strongholds, from which it will, as there is little doubt, hereafter issue again to infest and to annoy us. Surely if this be so, the reproach will then suit us only too well: 'Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times. Then hadst thou smitten till thou hadst consumed.'

Grant, O Lord, that we may not fall short of such an occasion when it is offered to us, as offered in one shape or another assuredly it will be; grant that we may not be haunted hereafter by the mournful recollection of fair opportunities of service which now have perished for ever; which have passed away, and so passed that no regrets of ours shall ever call them back and again make them ours.

27. *DISCONTENT.*

'Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?'—*Jon.* iv. 9.

Ah, Lord, when I forge and feign imaginary griefs for myself, when I nurse small vexations, petty disappointments, till they grow to huge annoyances in my own eyes, when I dare to change words even with my God, and to say that I do well to be angry, though it be with Him, am I not then doing my best—or say rather my worst, to provoke Thee to send me calamities which shall be such indeed? But now, and to the end that I may a little show my sin, at least to myself, in its own proper ugliness, suffer me not to forget how at the very moment when, it may be, I am thus playing with a fantastic grief, it is actually faring with multitudes of my fellows, many times better and truer and holier than myself. Think, O my soul, of all those, the mourners who have survived everything, even hope itself, the incurables who pace the long halls of pain in the vast hospital of this world; its deposed, discrowned, and disinherited, for whom all the

ornament of life has for ever departed, perhaps by their own fault, perhaps by that of others—but in either case gone—and so gone that it never can come back again; long pain the road *by* which, and death the goal *to* which, they must travel.

Consider these a little, what are their claims, and what thine own; and then ask thyself whether thou art prepared to demand from God that thou mayest be an exception from that law of suffering, which is the common law of all others. Shall I account myself as in a measure aggrieved, because God has not framed and fashioned my life differently from the lives of all other sinful children of Adam? For when we ask all good things for ourselves, and deprecate the mingling with this good of any portion of evil, what in fact are we doing? Translate these claims of thine into plain language, and to what do they amount? Is it not to this?—'O righteous Lord, make me an exception to the general rule by which Thou orderest the lives of other men. Let it be, if Thou wilt, a law for all others, that through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God, but not for me. Scourge, if such be Thy pleasure, every other son whom Thou receivest, but receive me without the stripes.' Is

it with a prayer like this upon our lips that we should like to imagine ourselves as drawing nigh to the throne of righteousness and grace and power? And yet it is exactly such a prayer that we are daring to present to the all-seeing and the all-knowing, to the Judge who is without partiality and without acceptance of persons, as often as we crave to be these monsters of prosperity, as often as we resent God's austerer dealings with us; finding, it may be, nothing amiss in these so long as they only touch others, but angry, impatient malcontents, so soon as ever they touch ourselves.

O Father of men, who measurest out to each his part and portion of good and of evil, preserve me from such an unreasonable prayer as this is. Teach me, as Thou only canst, to accept with meekness and, so far as this may be, with joy, a sinner's doom.

28. *THANKFULNESS.*

'Giving thanks always for all things.'—*Ephes.* v. 20.

THESE words out of all doubt imply that giving of thanks should form a part of all our prayers—that whatever else these may contain, ascriptions of glory to God, confessions of sin, acknowledgements of our own needs, intercessions for others, this giving of thanks should not be wanting. But fares it so indeed? We are only too seldom in prayer and supplication, too seldom making our request in this way known unto God; but it is only too likely that we are less frequent still in thanksgiving. To prayer we are in some sort driven by the urgency of present needs, but no such urgency compels us to praise, which therefore far more easily falls into the background with us, is offered languidly at first, is sometimes hardly rendered at all, He to whom vows were made while the peril was near, being remembered no more. Scripture too, as I have said, has set forth on a larger scale the same melancholy truth. What a cry of anguish was that which

went up from the forlorn company of lepers, who standing afar off saw Jesus passing by, and feared that this, their one opportunity of healing, was escaping them for ever (Luke xvii. 13). Their cry was heard, but of all that company one only found his way back to his Healer's feet, giving Him thanks. We wonder perhaps at the ingratitude of the nine, and yet we need not. It repeats itself in other suppliants, and for these we have no need to look far. How often, it may be, has a voice of anguish ascended from some of us: Take away this fear from me. Scatter that dark cloud. Abridge the anguish of this suspense. Give me some ease from this intolerable pain. Deliver me from the clinging curse of former sin. Our prayer is heard, and then after a little the very recollection of the anguish fades from us, and He who has filled our mouths with good might seem in the same act to have stopped our mouths; at least if we are to judge from the ungrateful silence which follows.

Or if it be not altogether thus, and granting that we retain a lively sense of some mercy, while it is yet fresh and new, how soon does this sense depart; and all which thus stirred us for a while falls little by little from out of our sights and our memories.

Thus fared it with the children of Israel by the Red Sea. Not all at once but 'after a while,' as we are expressly told, they forgot the works of their Redeemer. And yet an old mercy is it not a mercy still? Are we not in matters innumerable reaping the fruits of mercies which are twenty, thirty, fifty years old? If it had gone otherwise with us then, at that crisis of our lives when we, it may be, were in danger of marring all by haste, by impatience, by unbelief, might not the whole tenor of our lives have been different from what it has proved; those lives, so rich in blessing now, emptied of half, or of all their brightness? How then not praise for old mercies as well as for new? Nay, are there not many, in which both these qualities meet; which are old, and yet at the same time new every morning, for they have run parallel with the whole course of our lives; they have so embraced us on every side as to be comparable to nothing so fitly as to that circumambient air which surrounds and sustains our bodies, and which, because of its equable pressure, is to us as though it were not at all, we remaining unconscious of the invisible but most real support which it gives?

But if gratitude be so rare, and ingratitude so

common, there is one counsel, one exhortation, which we cannot lay too close to heart. It is this. Let us never take for granted that thankfulness will come of itself. It needs to be looked for, to be called out, to be fostered and fed. None knew this better than the Psalmist, who therefore stirred himself so often to acts of thankful praise: 'Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name,' knowing, as he did so well, that if he waited till thankfulness came of itself and unbidden, he might wait for it for ever.

29. *DAVID'S SIN AND REPENTANCE.*

'I have sinned against the Lord.'—2 *Sam.* xii. 13.

How rare and fearless an outspokenness marks the language in which the sins of God's saints are recorded in that Book which is eminently a Scripture of truth, a word of God. All is recorded there. The untruth which Abraham told (Gen. xx. 2), and the untruth to which he invited his wife (Gen. xii. 13), Jacob's frauds and trickeries (Gen. xxvii. 14; xxx. 37), the angry and impatient words which Moses spoke in his haste, Miriam's jealousy of her brother's promotion (Num. xii. 1, 2), Eli's tardy and half-hearted rebuke of his sons (1 Sam. ii. 23), the wives of Solomon so strange and so many (1 Kin. xi. 1), the ostentation of Hezekiah (2 Kin. xx. 13), the contention of Paul and Barnabas, sharp enough to separate between such friends as these (Acts xv. 39), all are on record there; and worse and sadder even than these, as St. Peter's denial of his Lord, David's adultery and

murder; all may be found written in that Book, with no attempt to palliate or conceal it.

Reasons enough there were, and those bearing on the highest interests of our souls, why these should not be passed over. Thus what a proof do they furnish of the fatal readiness with which we, set as we are to keep this city of 'Mansoul' against all forces of our spiritual enemy, too often shamefully betray our trust, ungird the loins of our minds; or if we do not advance so far as this, remit that watchfulness all round, that habitual circumspection of our spirits, which we were set to maintain. It needs but a few easy triumphs over sins which do not mightily solicit us, a few ordinary temptations overcome, and we count that all is won, that we are already more than conquerors, may now dwell securely, none making us afraid. What a commentary on such a vain confidence as this does that history supply, both in what it tells, and also in what it does not tell. It is thus that the story of David's fall begins: 'And it came to pass, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David'—did what? Is it, led forth the Lord's host? Alas! no, nothing of the kind; but what then?—that he sent Joab with others on this warlike errand; but

'David himself tarried still at Jerusalem' (2 Sam. xi. 2). Ah, if the king had been sharing the hard couch of earth in the open fields, with Joab and Uriah and the rest before the walls of Rabbah, it is little likely that we should have ever heard of his sin. One page of his history, a page now so blurred and so blotted, would be looked for in vain. The lax walk, the self-indulgent living, the too liberal use of things permitted, who can suppose that these preparations for a fall were absent in this case? 'We perish by things permitted' (*Perimus licitis*), was a saying, as Baxter tells us, often on the lips of good Sir Matthew Hale. Let it be often in our thoughts.

But David's sin and David's repentance as set forth to us in Holy Scripture, what careful handling do they require, as indeed does the whole subject of the sins of God's saints. On this subject, however, I cannot enter now. Only, O my God, let me never lose sight of the fact how fatally easy it is to sin after the pattern of David's sin, without ever repenting after the pattern of David's repentance, to fall as he did, without again standing upon our feet as he stood. Surely, too, when the oak falls, it is time for the willows to tremble.

30. *VICARIOUS SUFFERING.*

'By whose stripes ye were healed.'—1 *Pet.* ii. 24.

We are taught in Thy Church, O Lord, that Thou gavest Thy life not merely *for the good* of others, but *in their room*, that Thou madest a *vicarious* offering upon Thy cross, bearing the sins of many, whom by this act Thou didst release from penalties which they must else have borne. The word, and the doctrine which that word embodies, often offend. Must not righteousness, it is urged, be the law of all God's dealings with his creatures? But how can that be called just, how indeed can it be acquitted of extreme injustice, which lays on one man the penalties of others, so that he pays the things which he never took, they sin and he is punished, on him only being laid the iniquity of all? What have we here, an adversary will insist, but in the most solemn sphere of all, and in matters the most tremendous, the same injustice which, even in least things, provokes our indignation; as, for instance, when some playfellow of a young

prince is constituted, as we may sometimes have read of, to suffer the consequences of *his* idleness; so that one neglects his tasks, and another is chastised; one plays the truant, and another bears the smart?

But the case is not in point; and, since it has been started, it might be worth our while to make it so, and then to consider whether it presents itself in any aspect so monstrous and absurd. To make it in point, the parts which the several persons sustain must, in the first place, be reversed. It must be that the young prince suffers for his humbler truant companions, not one of them for him; it must be that he does it, not of compulsion and violence, but of his own free will; it must be that only such an act as this would overcome their perversity and idleness; that he offers himself to this correction, knowing that nothing else would accomplish the work, while this would effectually do so. A submission with this knowledge to the punishment of others' faults and negligences and shortcomings might be strange, even as all acts of condescending self-offering love are strange in a world of selfishness and pride; but surely there would be nothing in it either monstrous or ridiculous.

And exactly in the same way, when we hear it urged, How can it be righteous to lay on one man the penalties of others? Surely we must feel that the question, to be effectually answered, needs only to be more accurately put; that the form which it ought to assume is this, How can it be righteous for one man *to take upon himself* the penalties of others? and none who remember the 'Lo! I come' of the Saviour, the willing sacrifice of our Isaac, prefigured by his who climbed so meekly in his father's company the hill of Moriah—none, I say, who remember this, will deny our right to make this change; while the whole moral aspect is now by this alteration changed altogether. For how many an act of heroic self-sacrifice, which it would be most unrighteous for others to force on one reluctant, which indeed would cease to be heroism or sacrifice at all, unless wholly self-imposed, is yet most glorious when one has freely offered himself to it; is only *not* righteous because it is so much better than righteous, because it moves in that higher region where law is no more known, yet only known no more because it has been transfigured into love. Wherein else is the chief glory of history but in those deeds of self-devotion, of

heroic self-offering, which, like trumpet tones sounding from the depths of the past, rouse us from the selfish dream of life to a nobler existence; and of which if the mention has become trite and commonplace now, it has only become so because the grandeur of them has caused them to be evermore in the hearts and on the lips of men. Vicarious suffering, it is strange to hear the mighty uproar which is made about it; when indeed in lower forms—not low in themselves, though low as compared with the highest—it is everywhere, where love is at all. For indeed is not this of one freely taking on himself the consequences of others' faults, and thus averting from those other at least in part the penalties of these, building what others have thrown down, gathering what others have scattered, bearing the burdens which others have wrapped together, healing the wounds which others have inflicted, paying the things which he never took, smarting for sins which he never committed; is not this, I say, the law and the condition of all highest nobleness in the world?—is it not that which God is continually demanding of his elect, they approving themselves his elect, as they do not shrink from this demand, as they freely own

themselves the debtors of love to the last penny of the requirements which it makes? And if these things are so, shall we question the right of God Himself to display this nobleness which He demands of his creatures? Shall we wish to rob Him of the opportunity of so doing, or think to honour Him who is highest love, by denying Him the right, Himself to display it?

31. *BIRTH SIN.*

'In sin did my mother conceive me.'—*Psalm* li. 5.

I SUPPOSE that in all ages of the Church Christian penitents—and as many as are Christ's at all, are penitents of his—have had each his favourite Psalm, the Psalm to which he has been drawn more than to any other, which had found him out in deeper depths of his being than any other had done; has lent him a voice, such as he could not anywhere else have found, or at any rate could not have found responsive to every need of his soul. Thus Luther was wont to say of Psalm cx., 'This is my Psalm;' while another has dwelt with discriminating love on some other, such as most of all has endeared itself to him.

But while this penitent has one favourite Psalm, and that another, there is over and above all these one Psalm which is everybody's Psalm, which constitutes a precious treasure common alike to all. 'Psalm of Psalms' we might rightly call it; since if by decree of destiny one only Psalm were permitted

to survive, this of which I speak would, if I do not greatly err, by a large preponderance of voices be selected as the one survivor among all. The Psalm of which I thus make so much is the 51st; sorrowful yet blessed fact as this, when we consider what the burden of that is, must be admitted to be. On this Psalm and its excellencies Donne has very beautifully said: 'As the whole book of Psalms is *oleum effusum*, an ointment poured out upon all sorts of sores, a searcloth that supples all bruises, a balm that searches all wounds, so are there some certain Psalms that are imperial Psalms, that command over all affections, and spread themselves over all occasions, catholic universal Psalms that apply themselves to all necessities. And of these imperial Psalms that command over all affections this is one.'

With what marvel it fills one, and I trust with a thankfulness which is not less, only to think of the help, the strength, the comfort which this the central penitential Psalm has yielded to thousands upon thousands of that vast army of sinning, sorrowing, suffering men who marching as under its shadow, fulfil their long unbroken procession from the cradle to the grave. Who can count up

or even dimly guess the number of the happy sinners for whom this Psalm has found a voice in some of the saddest moments of their lives, in times which this same has helped not a little to make also among the most blessed? As we catch the voices which evermore ascend from the innumerable company of the pilgrims of eternity, doubtless there is not wanting many a *Te Deum* and many a *Magnificat*; even as a day shall come when these shall swallow up all other voices; but so long as man's way lies through this valley of tears, the *Misereres*, for this present time the saddest and the sweetest music of all, shall make themselves heard above every other strain and song.

Does any ask, what is there in this Psalm which enables it to exercise so potent an influence, to be for us all which this is? Many things no doubt; but above all the manner in which it stands, as with Gen. iii. and perhaps some few utterances in the Book of Job it does stand, as the great anti-pelagian utterance of the Old Testament, grasping as nowhere else so evidently and so mightily is grasped, the fact of the mournful inheritance, the *damnosa hæreditas*, as heir of which every one of us commences the unfolding under solicitation from

without of his moral being. Those words of David, 'In sin hath my mother conceived me,' may sound at first as a partial apology on David's part for his wickedness. But indeed this is quite to miss their meaning; they are an acknowledgement rather of that original fault which is the fault not of one here and one there, but common to all; not super-induced after the life had run a certain course, but having its beginning so early as to be out of all sight, belonging as it does to that mysterious time when the foundations of our being were laid for us, and mingling itself with these.

32. MAN HIS OWN DESTROYER.

'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help.'
Hos. xiii. 9.

It is the dreadful prerogative of man, as distinguished from all those inferior creatures which move in the same world as he does, that he can make shipwreck of his life—of his natural life, of his moral life, of his spiritual; that he can, in the terrible words of the Prophet, 'destroy himself.' Not so the animals beneath him. They move, and with apparent satisfaction, each in its own restricted sphere, and fulfil each and all the conditions of that existence which God has appointed for them. They cannot do evil, though indeed they buy this inability at a dear rate: for as they cannot do evil, so it follows of necessity that they cannot do good. It is not given to them to violate the fundamental laws of their own being. They cannot lay up sorrow and shame and remorse for themselves, guilty memories of evil, committed

it may be long ago, dark and direful recollections, fears of a judgment which one day must overtake them. Their life, if it has nothing grand or glorious about it, is an innocent life; and they may be said in their limited range of things to serve God, and to fulfil his intention in their creation. Whatever may be said about them, they do not 'destroy themselves.' But how different a lot is man's. He can utterly lay waste his life—he can plant in the very centre of that life seeds of dissolution and death, can wholly defeat the purposes of his creation, a rebel and revolter against the eternal laws of that world in which he must work out the solemn problem of his life. And what he can do, he continually does. What a scene of moral ruin does the world as we read its records of the past, as we interpret the spectacle which it offers now, to our sight present. On a scale how enormous, with a success how terrible, does man work out his own destruction, leaving nothing undone which shall make that destruction complete.

And yet, true as all this may be, it is not all the truth. Sad and stern as this sentence is, it is not the last word which God has to say to his erring children. There still remain those words

of grace: '*but in Me is thine help.*' Let us bethink us of these and of all the hope that is in them; for indeed they are worth it. Think of those, how many whom the world has first betrayed, and then utterly rejected, how many bankrupt in name and fame, and in all which the world can give, friendless, for they have alienated all their friends, loveless, for they have chased all that loved them away, how many drinking to the dregs of that cup of shame which they themselves and no other have mingled for them, how many perishing with a worse hunger than the Prodigal ever knew, how many stretched upon beds of hopeless agony, in hospitals, in prisons, in banishments, on scaffolds, have set their seal to the truth of these words of thine; have dared to cast upon Thee the whole burden of their guilty being, and found Thee able and willing to sustain it all. And what words are those which fall from the lips of the Divine Healer; say if they are not these, or like to these? 'All others may have forsaken thee, but I have not forsaken. I who know all the saddest secrets of thy soul, am willing to take thy cause in hand. Others may despair of thee; thou mayest despair of thyself; but I do not despair. There is balm in my Gilead,

and I am wise to heal and mighty to save. I will bring thee out of great depths, draw thee out of deep mire, set thy feet upon a rock, even upon that Rock which is higher than Thou, yea the Rock which is higher than all. In Me, if only thou wilt know it, in Me is thine help.'

33. *THE SON OF MAN IN HIS GLORY.*

'Then shall He sit upon the throne of his glory.'—*Matt.* xxv. 3

THE King, expected so long, is sitting at length upon his throne. The nations are gathered before Him. The trumpet of a great sound has summoned them from the four corners of the earth, and from his lips they await their doom, a doom already ominously foreshewn in the places they severally occupy on the right hand and on the left, good by a natural affinity being gathered to good, and evil to evil. And then He, to whom mercy is a welcome as judgment is a strange work, addresses Himself first to those who are the objects of his mercy, as others have been the objects of theirs. He pronounces them the blessed of his Father; merciful themselves, they shall obtain mercy in turn, and shall do no less than inherit a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

Very remarkable is the joyful surprise with which this announcement and this invitation are received. They feel that He is ascribing to them an

honour too great and too high for them with any right to appropriate to themselves. 'When saw we Thee hungry and fed Thee, a stranger and took Thee in, sick or in prison, and came unto Thee?' Counting so slightly of what they had done, they cannot understand how He should count so greatly; while yet it was just because they had thought so little, that their Lord had thought so much; because they had forgotten, that He had remembered.

Re-assuring thought—for what if the day of judgment be a dreadful day, wherein all hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, it is a day no less in which all hidden things of light, which yet have shunned the light with no less care than if they had been deeds of darkness, shall be manifested too. The act of self-denial, unmarked by any except him that did it, the sacrifice of self-will unnoticed here, but not unnoticed in heaven, the wrestling, as of Jacob with the Angel, even to the break of day, the alms which the right hand gave, and the left hand never knew, all these shall be drawn from the secrecy which they have chosen, for He with whom we have to do is not unrighteous to forget the smallest of these; and, thought more precious still, the minutest deed of love

which shall have been done to the smallest of them whose nature He has assumed, He shall then impute as done to Himself. It is He, the Lord of glory Himself, whom in this naked one we clothe, whom in this stranger we take in, in this sick we visit or relieve. We read of some who have entertained angels unawares. But more than angels, even Him who is the Lord of these, it is ours to entertain, if only we will. As we walk up and down in the world He meets us in his suffering members; He offers Himself unto us under manifold disguises; strange and unlikely, squalid, sordid, repulsive these may oftentimes be, but still He is there, to be detected by the eye of faith, to be ministered unto by the hand of love.

But this truth is not without its sterner and sadder side. 'Blessed are the merciful' contains in it as a necessary consequence and complement 'Cursed are the unmerciful,' God's love of good is itself his hatred of evil. These are not two different qualities or attributes in Him; but only two different manifestations of one and the same supreme moral energy, rejoicing in that which is like, repelling that which is unlike to its own perfect self. A God of love must also be a God of anger.

He cannot truly love the good without being also a hater of the evil. Our 'God is love' and our 'God is a consuming fire,' so far from contradicting one another, would not be true, the one without the other. And therefore there must needs follow on 'Come, ye blessed,' another and a sadder word, 'Depart from Me, ye cursed. The kingdom of love rejects you as you have rejected it. Be filled with your own doings. Be gathered under your own head, under the banner of him who is the prince of lust, of selfishness, of pride, as I am the Prince of purity, of humility, of love, and would fain have gathered you under mine.'

And then follow the grounds of their condemnation. All of love which the righteous had shewn to Christ, these had failed to shew. He had walked up and down the world in the person of each sick and naked and hungry soul which they met. Shewing love to these, they might have shewn love to Him; but no: 'I was an hungred and ye gave Me no meat. I was thirsty and ye gave Me no drink. I was a stranger and ye took Me not in; naked and ye clothed Me not; sick and in prison and ye visited Me not.' How characteristic the answer of these. The others would have repudiated

the praise—could not understand what they had done so much, or how it should be honoured so highly. These repudiate the condemnation; their eyes are holden, so that even now and on the brink of doom, they cannot see their sin, nor the greatness of their guilt. For indeed thus it is evermore. The good think themselves worse than they are, and the bad think themselves better. The faithful say, When did we do this? and the wicked, When did we fail to do this? their delusion following them to the verge of the grave and beyond it. Shew us ourselves, O Lord; whatever else Thou mayest hide from us.

34. *CHRIST AS A REFINER.*

[AD CLERUM.]

'He shall sit as a refiner, and He shall purify the sons of Levi.'
Mal. iii. 3.

How often the life of God's saints, how often the life above all of those who are appointed to stand in his counsels and to declare to others the mysterious ways of his love, is, as measured by the world's standards, one long disappointment and defeat. You, who perhaps are laying out in thought the future of your lives for yourselves, and if not how that future shall actually be, yet at any rate how you would desire it to be, of this you may be certain, that it will not be as you desire or as you expect; that He who leads his own securely to the end, yet leads them seldom or never by the path along which they fain would go. His is a love too wise, too true, too far-looking for this; and He means that his own shall praise Him not for an hour here, but for an eternity in heaven. What a traverser of schemes, what a baffler of purposes is our God! He fulfils indeed the desire of them that

love Him, for the central desire of their soul is for holiness; but He often fulfils it in its essence by baffling it in its form. Those who are conscious to themselves of rarest gifts, who are yearning for the sympathy, perhaps for the applause, of wide circles, are set in the background of things, to feed, it may be, their whole life long, a few sheep out of sight in the wilderness; while he on the other hand, who would fain have crept to heaven by the lowly valleys and obscure paths, who would have taken, if he might, the saying of the heathen sage, *Bene vixit qui bene latuit*, for the motto of his life, is set in the eyes of all men, in the full and pitiless glare of the middle day, God defeating alike the eager ambitions of the one and the pusillanimous shrinkings out of sight of the other.

And his 'Go up higher,' that bidding which we in our carnal hearts may have desired to be addressed to ourselves, or may have had in admiration, when addressed to others and manifestly fulfilled in them, what does it indeed signify? What do his servants find it to signify, if they be not merely yearning after the vulgar prizes of a worldly ambition, if they at all interpret it as their God intends that they shall do? Does it not mean

this? Go forward to a stricter rule, to a larger labour, to more continual anxiety, to a more perilous account. Forsake the safe security which thou lovedst, and stand henceforward exposed to the arrows of slander, to the scourge of the tongue. For such indeed is the meaning of a 'Go up higher' in the Church of Him, who being Himself the highest of all, made Himself therefore the minister of all; was exalted, but upon a cross; so interpreting to us what the high places in his kingdom mean, and what they bring in their train.

Other processes He has, the great spiritual Refiner, who sits in the midst of his Church, to make liker to Himself, and thus more capable of reflecting his image, those on whom He has set his heart, and at whose hands He would fain accept an offering not mean nor poor; and having appointed to them a kingdom, He appoints to them first of all to drink of his cup and to be baptized with his baptism. And thus it comes to pass that theirs very often is the desolate home and the long years of a lonely existence. Perhaps they go childless, having by a sad reverse of Nature's ordinance followed to their last long home those whose pious steps they had hoped should one day have followed them to

theirs; or the ominous hours knock at their door with the tidings of mishap and death from distant lands, and even this last sad privilege is denied. And so it fares with them to the end, and the road which they travel heavenward can be likened to nothing so well as to that Appian Way, by which stranger or pilgrim nowadays enters Rome; and for long miles, as he approaches the City which calls itself Eternal, passes through an avenue of tombs, which on this side and on that, now in clusters and now a little farther apart from one another, skirt his path. It is possible that some whom we have seen around us may so pass to the eternal City of their everlasting rest, still leaving behind them, as they travel onward, the memorials of their beloved, the sad waymarks of their pilgrimage, and only by this long avenue of death shall reach at length the City of everlasting life. What way indeed is there for any one of us but only this? It was well said long ago, 'The way to heaven is by Weeping Cross;' and all true pilgrims shall find it so.

Spottiswoode & Co., Printers, New-street Square, London.

00111236

A wonderful Book
I like it you Jesus

Colv CHITRANJAN
03 Sep 1992.

21 DEC 1979

21 DEC 1979
25 FEB 1980

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 05 October, 2018